

# *The* GRACE JOURNAL

*"Taking God's Grace to the World"*

A BIBLE STUDY AND NEWS PERIODICAL

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## *Walking In Him*

BY RICHARD JORDAN

To attempt to do service for God without knowledge of the current program He has in operation is only to court disaster.

The writer, for example, speaks each year at a number of annual Bible conferences. Each conference has its own schedule and program. To use the program from, let's say, the Florida conference in the Ohio meeting or last year's program at this year's California conference would result in untold confusion. Times and topics would be hopelessly confounded and little possibility would exist for a successful meeting. It goes without saying that we must follow the current program for each conference if we hope for them to be conducted in an orderly fashion.

How much more is this true where the program of God is concerned. We simply *must* follow the current program—the one God Himself has in place today.

It should be the heartfelt desire of all believers to have the will of God executed in the details of their lives. While volumes have been written and spoken on this subject, it really is not as complicated as it often seems. Simply put: if you want to do the will of God in your life, find out what God is doing and do that! *If you are doing what God is doing, you are doing the will of God.*

In order to have God's will working actively in our lives and ministries, we must get in line with and become participants in what He is doing today. This is the only way to avoid working under the energy of the flesh.

There is nothing more discouraging than trying in our own energy and power, with our own abilities and resources, to serve God and make the Christian life "work" successfully. Who does not know something of the discouragement of such efforts!

But does not this provide an insight to the cause of the confusion, impotency and division which have plagued the church of Jesus Christ for most of its history? By not clearly recognizing what God Himself is actually doing in the dispensation of grace, by failing to "*rightly divide the word of truth*," much of Christendom continues to seek to do things that God Himself has rendered inoperative and out of place.

Although often ignored, the dispensational approach to the Scripture provides much needed instruction about the different programs God has had in operation at different stages of revelation. One of the tremendous benefits of studying the Bible dispensationally is a clear recognition of what God is *not* doing today, an identification of things that once were a part of His program but which are not a part of our current administration of grace.

Because of the importance of this aspect of our study, there is a tendency among some dispensationalists to emphasize the negatives—to focus primarily on what God is *not* doing today so as to eliminate the demand for confusing and unworthy practices. We must, however, also be careful to "accentuate the positive"—to give adequate attention to just what God *is* doing today so we understand just what makes up the current program and purpose of God.

One passage that does just this in "nutshell" form is Colossians 2:6,7. Paul declares:

"AS ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, SO WALK YE IN HIM:

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."

Often the Apostle Paul describes the Christian life as a "*walk*." This is a very instructive term: We know what it is to *walk*—to make steady

progress, one step at a time, through life. In Scripture the term is thus used to describe that steady forward process through life that is to mark a child of God as he day by day serves his Savior.

But *how* is this to be accomplished? What makes this walk possible? Paul makes the answer clear with an “*as...so*” comparison:

“AS ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, SO walk ye in him” (v. 6).

The “*as...so*” combinations of Scripture are important helps for our understanding. Paul uses something we do understand to illuminate something he wants us to understand.

“AS ye have therefore received Christ”: And how did you receive Him? The previous verse leaves no doubt as to the intended answer:

“For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST” (Col. 2:5).

We were saved *by grace through faith*. We received by faith the gift God offered us by His grace.

God did us a wonderful “unmerited favor”—we did not deserve it, nor did we work for it; we could not earn it nor did He owe it to us. He was under no obligation to act in our behalf. Rather, in love He did us a favor and provided “*the gift of God [which] is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*” (Rom. 6:23).

And this gift is completely *free*—no “strings” attached. It is given “*freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 3:24). God’s grace is unalterably tied to Calvary. It has no other source. It is by means of the redemption that is in Christ that salvation is possible. The cross is God’s instrument: Christ crucified, bearing our sins and our guilt, taking our punishment as He dies in our place in order to fully pay our sin debt.

This is God’s grace—His favor to us. And we can only receive this delightfully given gift by faith:

“For BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; and that not of yourselves: IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD:

“Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8,9).

We are saved by trusting in Christ’s death for our sins, depending exclusively on His finished work on the cross as the full payment for our sins.

Faith is the only thing we can do without doing something, for faith is trusting what someone else has done:

“BUT TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, BUT BELIEVETH on him that justifieth the ungodly, HIS FAITH IS COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Rom. 4:5).

And faith is the *only* response grace can accept. This is a fundamental fact of the Christian life. Romans 11:6 is wonderfully clear on this point:

“And IF BY GRACE, THEN IS IT NO MORE OF WORKS: OTHERWISE GRACE IS NO MORE GRACE....”

How is the Christian life begun? *By grace through faith*. We receive God’s wonderful free gift of special favor by relying on His work on the cross for us.

“*SO walk ye in Him:*” the way we *began* the Christian life is just how we *go on living* the Christian life. We are not saved by grace to then walk by our own efforts. We are to continue as we began:

“...WE HAVE ACCESS BY FAITH INTO THIS GRACE WHEREIN WE STAND...” (Rom. 5:2).

We are going to steadily advance through life only as we move forward by faith in His provisions for us in Christ. And make no mistake about it, our walk is ever “*in Him*.” The Christian life is lived in union with Christ. This means that He lives His life through us as by faith we walk in line with what He is doing today.

This, of course, is why we must be careful to rightly divide the word of truth so as to know just where we do stand in the purpose of God and just what He does have in order today. It is not enough to simply be Scriptural, we *must* be dispensational in all we do.

Colossians 2:7 provides a four-fold description of our “*walk in Him*,” describing just what the Christian life consists of today:

“Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

## ROOTED IN HIM

First, we have been “*rooted...in Him*.” This is something God has done for us—not something we must or can do for ourselves. Also it is a *permanent* condition—something that was completely accomplished for us in the past and that lasts forever.<sup>1</sup>

1. *Rooted* is the perfect tense—the action was completed in the past and the results continue into the present. It is the most permanent tense possible.

Being “rooted” in Christ is an instructive way of saying that we have been placed into *living union* with Him. Just as a tree sinks its roots deep down into the soil for its life and sustenance, God has taken each believer and rooted us deeply down into His beloved Son so that we are partakers of *His* life—our life comes from Him. Colossians 3:4 declares:

“When Christ, WHO IS OUR LIFE, shall appear, then shall ye appear with him in glory.”

Don’t read that verse too quickly! God has so placed us into oneness with Jesus Christ that *He* is our life! How is this accomplished? Galatians 3:26-28 answers:

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

“FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all ONE IN CHRIST JESUS.”

Although circumstances may vary widely, the moment each believer trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, God the Holy Spirit places us into union with Him, making us one with Him. God now sees us *in Him*—“rooted in Him.”

Just as our hand is in living union with our arm which in turn is in living union with the trunk of our body—on up to our head; so each member of our body shares the life of all the body. Each member of the human body is one with all the body and equally has the life of the body in it. So it is that we are in *living union with Christ*. Hence Galatians 3:29 argues:

“And if YE BE CHRIST’S, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

We are Christ’s—His possessions. We belong to Him just as the members of our human bodies belong to us. This is all accomplished by our being “baptized into Christ.” That this baptism is “the operation of God” and not of a preacher or priest is clear from I Corinthians 12:13:

“FOR BY ONE SPIRIT ARE WE ALL BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

Baptism is, of course, a “bug-a-boo” in the Church today. If you want to cause strife among believers, just mention the topic of baptism. It is still “Religious T-N-T”! Too many carelessly assume that the only baptism found in Scripture is *water* baptism and thus fail to appreciate the “one

*baptism*” that God has in operation in this current dispensation.<sup>2</sup>

Our baptism is “*by one Spirit*.” Clearly this is not a water ceremony nor is it the baptism *with* the Spirit of Pentecost—a baptism performed *by* Christ (Matt. 3:11, Acts 1:5). This baptism is the Holy Spirit taking believing sinners and identifying them in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that they are said to be *one with Him*. Indeed, Colossians 2:10 tells us:

“AND YE ARE COMPLETE IN HIM, which is the head of all principality and power.”

Everything He has done has become ours. A simple illustration might help to explain our oneness with Christ: If a person commits a crime, say a robbery, with his *right* hand, his *left* hand goes to jail too (along with the rest of his body)! The *left* hand cannot stand before the judge and argue that it should not be put in jail, that *it* did nothing wrong. Rather, that person’s whole being was involved in the crime—and also, justly, in the sentence.

In just this way we are said to be “*crucified with Christ*.” How? Because we are “in Him”—made one with Him by “the operation of God.” Not only this, but we have been *buried* with Him, *raised* with Him and *seated* with Him. What all this means to us is explained in Ephesians 1:3:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath BLESSED US WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST.”

And what are these spiritual blessings? Just read and meditate on Ephesians 1:4-14 for a few moments and you will be richly rewarded with the beginnings of a list: chosen, sanctified, predestinated, adopted, welcomed and accepted, redeemed, forgiven, enlightened, sealed and much more—all *in Him*. To *walk* “rooted in Him” is to see these wonderful truths in God’s word with the eye of faith.

God’s program today is not found in religious activities—observing days, performing pious works, ceremonial correctness or the like. Rather, it is all based in being *rooted in Christ*—God Himself placing believing sinners into living union with His Son and making them one with Him and all He has accomplished through the cross of Calvary.

Our walk is based upon our being planted into the good soil of salvation *in Christ*.

2. See the author’s booklet, *Water Baptism*.

## BUILT UP IN HIM

This is the balance of the equation: We are “rooted *and* built up in Him.” The former is our permanent position in Christ; the latter is its present impact. Our position in Christ is designed so as to have a practical effect in the details of our lives. Galatians 2:20 sets this forth in familiar words:

“I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST: NEVERTHELESS I LIVE; YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME....”

We have been *crucified* with Christ—thus we are to reckon ourselves *dead to sin* (Rom. 6:11). We were *buried* with Him—thus we are to *put off* the old corrupt man (Eph. 4:22). We have been raised together with Christ—thus we *set our affection on things above* (Col. 3:2). We have been *seated* in heavenly places in Christ—hence we have free and unrestricted *access to God* with boldness and confidence (Eph. 3:12). The former is our position; the latter is our privilege—all in Him.

How do we make these spiritual realities part of our experience? This is achieved “*by the hearing of faith*.”

“This only would I learn of you, RECEIVED YE THE SPIRIT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW, OR BY THE HEARING OF FAITH?

“Are ye so foolish? HAVING BEGUN IN THE SPIRIT, ARE YE NOW MADE PERFECT BY THE FLESH?” (Gal. 3:2,3).

Faith is trusting God’s word rather than our own human reasoning. God says all believers are in Christ and thus, for example, “*dead to sin but alive unto God*.” When we actually believe this and *make decisions based on the truth of it*, we allow the Holy Spirit the freedom to take this truth and liberate us from sinful actions and attitudes, replacing them with “righteousness and true holiness.”

As we *by faith* build into our lives what Scriptures tell us Christ is doing today, we are filling our lives with the resources that enable us to reflect who we are in Him. Only as we do what He is doing are we building up our lives. Anything other than this is tearing down, destroying rather than edifying. This is why a correct, sound understanding of the rightly divided word is vital to our spiritual life and health. This is the only means of gaining a viewpoint of life that corresponds to God’s viewpoint.

When Jude 20 speaks of being built up in the most holy faith, he is referring to the same issue Paul sets forth in Acts 20:32,

“And now, brethren, I commend you to God and TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

This is God’s building program for the believer—daily being built up in Christ by the word of His grace. Grace is what builds and motivates the Christian life. Titus 2:11,12 speaks of grace “*teaching us*”—teaching us how God has blessed us in Christ is the Holy Spirit’s way to get us to respond in love and obedience to God’s love for us.

As we build into our lives the things that Christ has provided us by His grace, we are *built up in Him*. The more fully we come to understand and believe to be true all that God has freely provided for us *in Christ*, the more assuredly can the Holy Spirit take those truths and set them free in our daily lives to have their designed impact.

This is what Paul refers to when he exhorts: “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom*” (Col. 3:16). To “dwell” is to “*settle down and feel at home*.” As God’s grace to us in Christ becomes so real and familiar to us that it is at home in our lives, a supernatural transformation begins to take place—our position comes alive in our practice!

The issue in being *built up in Him* is, of course, edification. “Godly edifying” comes only as we erect an edifice or structure of sound doctrine in our souls. This internal spiritual edifice gives us the stability, protection and motivation to function as members of the Body of Christ should. The more we learn about who God has made us in Christ, the more able we are to function appropriately. Thus we must be

## STABLISHED IN THE FAITH

“*Stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught*”—it is only as the truth of God’s grace is more and more understood and assured that we grow and are stabilized in our spiritual lives.

There is no getting away from the word “*faith*”! In this instance it is referring to the doctrine taught by the Apostle Paul.

As we store up the “*word of His grace*” in our soul, it builds stability in our lives and gives us the ability to stand against the pressures and trials of life and to experience our adult sonship status as members of the Body of Christ.

The issue is sound doctrine. Paul exhorts,

“HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS, WHICH THOU HAST HEARD OF ME, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

“THAT GOOD THING WHICH WAS COMMITTED UNTO THEE KEEP BY THE HOLY GHOST WHICH DWELLETH IN US” (II Tim. 1:13,14).

Just as Satan directly opposed Israel’s kingdom program while Christ was on earth, so he has his policy of opposition to God’s present program of grace. Hence Paul warns in Colossians 2:8,

“BEWARE LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER THE TRADITION OF MEN, AFTER THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND NOT AFTER CHRIST.”

Clearly there are other programs in the world besides God’s program. There is a Satanic policy of evil in operation against us. Its clear objective is to “*spoil*” the believer. This is a military term that speaks of being taken as a captive. Satan wants to take believers captive to his program—to make us “*prisoners of war*,” as it were, and *rob us* of our possession—thus neutralizing us in the battle. Some of these other programs are listed for us in Colossians 2:16, 18, 19:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon or of the Sabbath days:

“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

“And NOT HOLDING THE HEAD, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

The underlying problem with all these other programs is summed up in the charge that they are “*not holding the Head*.” In other words, these systems hinder the believer from realizing and remembering who we are *in Christ*—that we are *in Him* and that our spiritual nourishment flows *from Him*. The result is a failure to be established as we should be.

As to properly “*holding the Head*,” Colossians 3:1,2 is excellent commentary:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

“SET YOUR AFFECTION ON THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THINGS ON THE EARTH.”

As we fix our hearts *on Him*; as all we have *in Him* and all that God is doing *in Him* become the focus that controls and dominates our lives, we find that this has a transforming effect and we are soon

#### ABOUNDING THEREIN WITH THANKSGIVING.

This is the only true response of an intelligent understanding of God’s grace! It is what makes us spiritually vital and vigorous. As we become firmly established in “the faith”—as these truths take root in our lives—we begin to abound in thanksgiving and true gratitude to God.

The true motivation for faithful service is a heart filled to overflowing with gratitude to God for all He has given us as a free gift of His grace through what Christ has done at Calvary when He died for our sins and rose again to be our life. Paul declares:

“FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US...” (II Cor. 5:14).

This is true grace motivation. When His great love for us begins to abound in our understanding, we can do nothing else but

“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS: AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE” (Phil. 4:4).

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THANKS FOR REMEMBERING that this is a work of faith made possible by the prayers and gifts of Christian friends.

I died with Christ at Calvary;  
was buried with Him too;  
God raised me from the dead,  
to live and walk anew.  
Accepted in Christ Jesus,  
I'm enjoying peace and rest;  
Seated far above with Him  
there I'm richly blessed.  
— J.C. O'Hair

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