

## THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

*Scripture Reading: Romans 6:1-14, Acts 20:24*

The gospel of the grace of God is the good news that God, in saving sinners, does so on no other ground than His own undeserved favor. The sinner has no merit of his own. He cannot earn salvation or work for it or buy it. He must accept it as a gift from God. It is given to him on one condition--that he believe the gospel. We read, "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe" (I Corinthians 1:21 RV).

We see then that the gospel is not something to do, but something to believe. "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5). "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8a). "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). All these Scriptures show that men are saved by the grace of God alone.

There are, however, two aspects of the gospel of grace. (1) The good news to the sinner is that Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures (I Cor. 15:3). Through Christ's death he is saved from the guilt, penalty, and condemnation of sins. (2) The good news to the saint is that there is for him a daily deliverance from the rule of sin in his life, because he has been made one with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This is the teaching of Romans 6. "Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

*P. P. Stoute*

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## THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

*Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:1-29, Ephesians 1:22-23*

"And He is the head of the body, the church . . . that in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Clever philosophers combined their intellectual treasures in a subtle strategy to divest Christ of His deity and glory. Significantly the Holy Spirit energizes Paul, a man of transcendent intellectual skill, to present Christ in the sphere of His highest glory. Paul could not bear to see the peerless splendor of Christ eclipsed and exalts Him, diffusing a brilliance of spiritual light in establishing the absolute pre-eminence of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Church history unfolds another stunning fact. While Satan failed to destroy the church through weird philosophies, it is apparent that he succeeded in neutralizing Paul's unique message with its heavenly calling (II Timothy 1:15). What heartbreak and sadness are bound up in his swan song. As Paul unveiled God's secret purpose for this age, the stalwart saints of Asia, Galatia and Rome withdrew systematically, clinging to an admixture of Law and Grace a tragic fusing of Israel and the Body Church.

Paul was not just another apostle, nor one of the twelve (Ephesians 3:1, Galatians 2:8,9, I Timothy 1:11-17, I Corinthians 3:9-11). Dispensationally, Paul's revelation was not a development of Judaism but gloriously new and super heavenly in scope.

Lift from our eyes, Oh Lord, the blindness that spawned the terrible dark ages of the church.

*Robert Roosendaal*

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**THE SON OF HIS LOVE***Scripture Reading: Colossians 1:1-13*

"Who delivered us out of the tyrannical rule of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love," (Wuest's translation of verse 13).

What grandeur and beauty permeate this beautiful Pauline phrase. We stand before it with unspeakable wonderment, realizing but a glimpse cast upon the ocean of God's infinite love. In Romans 11:29-36 Paul conveys a sense of utter helplessness to comprehend such love after gazing into the frightening abyss of man's desperation.

"The Son of His Love" -- How amazing -- beautiful in simplicity and yet inexhaustible in sublimity! Scientists tell us there are more than ten billion galaxies that have been sighted. Man will search the universe in vain for any other means of dealing with sin except through "The Son of His Love."

"The Son of His Love" -- How significant. Scan the verses that follow, and realize that when this love tide is lavished upon our Lord, Paul immediately excels in setting forth the glories of our Lord and Saviour! This accounts for the intensity of Paul's prayer: "that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Meditate quietly upon the wonderful names of our Wonderful Lord, and you will be enthralled by the wonder of it all.

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**ABOUNDING GRACE***Scripture Reading: Romans 5:15-21*

We must confess our incompetence in contemplating the wellspring of Grace from the inexhaustible heart of God. Scripture unveils a woeful drama-banishment from heaven of one third of the angelic host in rebellion against God under Lucifer. With judgment looming in the lake of fire, there is no hope for these superior beings.

Wonder of wonders that man in his wretchedness and woe need not be eternal participants with them. What contrast! Man need never thirst again as he drinks from the infinite fountain of Grace flowing freely from Calvary.

Paul majors in all the great Bible doctrines. In Romans chapter one, he exposes man in all his wretchedness and woe. Man hits bottom. Sin and death are depicted here as totalitarian dictators with iron grip, causing their victims to be crushed by the dread disease of sin.

Three times, one is stunned by the declaration-"GOD GAVE THEM UP!" More awesome is the temporal but terrible setting aside of the favoured nation Israel, in succeeding chapters.

After the nations rejected God at Babel and Israel rebelled against the crucified, risen and glorified Lord, God in mercy saves the greatest enemy of the Hebrew Church, transforming him into one of the greatest preachers the world has ever witnessed among redeemed men.

With Paul's salvation begins the unique story of God's abounding Grace to a world in rebellion against God. In longsuffering God has waited 2,000 years. Grace will someday finish the Divine Masterpiece, The Church Which Is His Body.

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## THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD BODILY

*Scripture Reading: Colossians 2:9, 1:15-19*

Our brother in Christ, Peter Deyneka, Jr., promoter of missions in communist countries, relates a revealing encounter with his cab driver upon requesting transportation to the Museum of Atheism in Moscow. "Why," the driver queried "Are you an Atheist?" Confessing his own experience of emptiness of life under an atheistic regime, he eventually begged: "Tell me . . . what do I need?" Pastor Deyneka became instrumental in ministering to his spiritual well-being.

In their tragic drift from God, Americans are turning more and more to substitutes: materialism, pleasure, worship of science, drugs and immorality. The terrible frustration of sin creates a dangerous void.

Relative to our glorious Lord we may rejoice in the fullness of His glorified Person and the fullness of blessing He imparts (Colossians 1:9; 2:3; 2:19). John presents it so beautifully: "And of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:16, 17). The gifts in Ephesians were given: "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ: Till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12, 13).

The church, which is His Body, is "The fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). In contrast to the void of our sin-sick world, the child of God has been "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" Ephesians 1:3).

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## CHRIST IN HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION

*Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23, Isaiah 53:1-10, 9:6*

During the joyous Christmas season Christendom fails dismally in either comprehension or appreciation of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Paul declares that ". . . for your sakes He became poor" (II Corinthians 8:9). His poverty and shameful suffering, though unfathomable, must be recognized far beyond His lowly birth in Bethlehem. In Psalms 22 and Isaiah 53, for example, one becomes dazed with astonishment at the incredible sight of the cross in prophecy: ". . . we hid as it were our faces from Him" (Isaiah 53:3). Dr. Scofield's footnote implies a total disfigurement effected by the brutalities and atrocities inflicted during our Saviour's crucifixion.

Actually, however, the Old Testament abounds in foretelling His glorious Kingdom reign, and this permeated the minds of orthodox Judaism. An illustration of this emphasis is given in Isaiah 9:6 ". . . the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Paul, who majors in unveiling the dazzling glories of our Wonderful Lord, delves into the depths of Christ's sevenfold humiliation in Philippians 2:5-8, and suddenly in verse 9 trumpets forth: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him . . ."

The late Pastor H. B. Prince once shared a dislike limiting reverence of the Lord by a repetitious use of the name "Jesus" instead of honoring Him as the LORD JESUS CHRIST. Handel's Messiah, a moving masterpiece of spiritual excellence, is befitting the Lord of Glory and how thrilling to sing "How Great Thou Art." Remember, that belittlement of Christ is a hallmark of the cults.

Grant us, oh precious Lord, a revival where we unite in giving Christ the pre-eminence in all things.

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## A TITLE THAT CAN NEVER BE CLOUDED

*Scripture Reading: II Timothy 1:12, Ephesians 4:30*

By virtue of the fact that we are identified with Christ, we as believers share in a judgment with Him that can never be repeated. Thus we shall face Him as the Living Redeemer in the air—not as the awesome Judge before the Great White Throne.

Inherent in the Finished Work of Christ, the child of God has been given a Title Deed that rests with our Advocate at the Right Hand of God. He who “spoiled principalities and powers by the cross and the impact of His ascension, “IS ABLE,” exclaims Paul, “TO KEEP THAT WHICH I HAVE COMMITTED UNTO HIM AGAINST THAT DAY.”

Paul's unparalleled song of jubilation emerges from the dirty and dark prison dungeon in Rome. Ironically he held a temporary prisoner's title to the miserable abode. However, from his redeemed being springs an outburst of assurance, standing like a bulwark of conviction in materialistic and paganistic Rome.

In authoring the “Swan Song,” Paul did not flippantly quote a verse out of context. Alas, for we sense the heartbeat of a lonely and suffering Apostle since the church had rebelled against Paul's unique message for this Age of Grace (II Timothy 1:15). Thus, his eyes of faith were focused far above the faltering church-upon the Person of Christ.

The “perilous times” seemed to fester even then with departure from the Pauline message, plaguing the church ever since with wreck and ruin. God's Word gives the lie to the self-righteousness and superstition so manifest today. Yes, our life is “HID WITH CHRIST IN GOD,” and “YE ARE SEALED UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION.”

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## THE DAY OF THE LORD

*Scripture Reading: Psalms 118:24*

The Word of God rightly divided according to II Timothy 2:15 is not only a major asset in Bible interpretation but also an essential aid in our devotional life. Prophecy foretells the conversion of the world, and in Isaiah 11:9 we read: “THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS COVER THE SEA.” Israel, God's earthly people, will look with faithful acceptance upon their pierced Messiah on His triumphal return to earth. As He establishes His Kingdom reign of glory, Israel will unite in praise and jubilation, singing Psalms 118: 24 - “THIS IS THE DAY WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE; WE WILL REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT.”

God's promises to Israel cannot be fulfilled in our dispensation of Grace, therefore in our devotional life we do not succumb with discouragement when we read that Satan is described in II Corinthians 4:4 as “THE GOD OF THIS WORLD”: The “perilous times” of II Timothy 3 are frightening, however, we are assured by “THAT BLESSED HOPE” (Titus 2:13 ) and overwhelmed by His all sufficient Grace. The day of Grace will close with The Body completed, lifted out from a Christ-rejecting world and united to its glorious Head.

Israel for hoary centuries has rejected Christ their Rock. The day will come when by virtue of His resurrection victory they shall recognize Him as “THE HEAD STONE OF THE CORNER.”

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