

## Experiencing Eternal Life Now

We of the self-righteous and holier-than-thou club (it's easy to become an accidental member, especially if we hang out with those whose faith is based in religiosity) have been scared witless of the word GRACE. We have believed that Grace means what the GRACE ALONE groupies have said it means: permission to sin while abiding in God's love. But, *grace* does not mean *permission to sin!*

Grace makes it possible for me **not** to sin! What a powerful statement. And, that power is real, because **GRACE** is God's Eternal Power at work in me! [**G**od's **R**ighteous **A**ction **C**hanging and **E**mpowering - GRACE] The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit at work in my life, and your life, is the manifestation of God's Grace!

Jesus said to His disciples, during the 40 days after His Resurrection and before His Ascension: "You shall receive power ... and, you shall be My witnesses". How can we be His witnesses if we cannot live as He teaches us to live? How can we be His witnesses if we cannot walk in righteousness?

Faith is not simply mental assent: "even the demons believe and tremble"<sup>1</sup>, but they are still demons! Many agree that Jesus is from God, but they refuse to be changed in accordance with His teachings. Faith is action. Obedient action. Faith is submitting to God's work in and through us.

Most people these days have never heard of a goat cart. A goat cart is a small cart that is pulled by a goat. The usual way that a goat was motivated to pull the cart was for the driver (usually a child .. goats can't really pull the weight of an adult) to dangle a carrot out in front of the goat .. the carrot was tied to a long stick, with a long string .. so, the carrot could always be held out in front of the goat in the direction that the driver wanted the cart to go. The point, of course, is that the goat could never get the carrot .. it was an "undelivered promise"!!!

Most Christians view GRACE and RIGHTEOUSNESS as an *undelivered promise!* So, when Jesus says "seek first His Kingdom and His *Righteousness*"<sup>2</sup>, they really don't think it will ever happen fully here on earth in our lifetime. WoW! What a concept of a loving God: people who believe He is a perverted tease, commanding us to seek something we have no hope of finding!

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<sup>1</sup> Jam 2:19 You believe that there is one God. That's fine! Even the demons believe that and tremble with fear.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 6.33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Grace is not primarily about forgiveness, and certainly is not about permissiveness. Righteousness is not about a status, nor is it merely a good idea. What Jesus promised us - an *eternal* quality of life **now** - is possible **now**.

We cannot merit (earn) God's love. We cannot merit or earn God's grace. We cannot earn God's love, nor can we cause Him to *stop* loving us. God chose to love us before we were born. He loved us *knowing* we would refuse Him, abuse Him; and we would abuse our fellow man and ourselves.<sup>3</sup>

God loved us *knowing* we would become sinners and rebels and black-hearted hypocrites. But, this did not diminish God's love for us! We cannot cause God to love us any more, nor can we cause God to love us any less. He loves us with an *everlasting, unconditional, unbreakable, covenant* love.

Do you know what our primary problem is as disciples of Jesus? Our primary problem is that many of us are the *elder son*! We think the parable of the *prodigal* (wasteful) son is about the *prodigal*.<sup>4</sup> But, it really isn't. The parable is really about the judgementalism and *self-righteousness* of the *elder son*! We like to judge [those who are currently *receiving* our Father's grace] more harshly than we ourselves were judged!

We *have been* on a "comparative faith endeavor".

"I'm not really as bad as he / she is. How come God is blessing them more than He is blessing me?"

(Tons of silence here while this sinks in.)

God never gave us permission to compare His blessings to others with the blessings we have received from Him. Do you know why?

Well, what did the father say to the elder son in the parable? *Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.*

**The elder son did not have the Father's provision because He did not access it!**<sup>5</sup> Read on ...

So, let's review what this founding member of the self-righteous and holier-than-thou club member did when he heard the party for his younger *brother*.

First, he was busy with his own works. He was working in the field.

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<sup>3</sup> **Rom 5:8** but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 15.11-32 Parable of the Prodigal Son – *prodigal* means wasteful.

<sup>5</sup> Luke 15.31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

Second, he got into gossip .. he asked a servant what was going on instead of the Father.

Third, he got angry! (Because his *wasteful brother* was being given a party!)

Fourth, he refused to go in and celebrate.

Fifth, he complained.

Sixth, we can see by the father's response that the son was relying on his own works instead of the Father's provision!

So, one wasteful brother received grace, and the other self-righteous brother sulked. Which resulted in a church split! One became a *celebration* church, and the other became the *First Church of Self-Righteous Works!*

We all want to bring something to God's table. We want to *contribute*. But, in the same way we had nothing to contribute to our salvation, so we have nothing to contribute to God's ongoing power at work in us! It is only out of our nothingness that God's righteousness can be manifested in us. [Out of *nothingness*, God created!]

We can sensitize our heart to God's Spirit, and tune out our emotions, talents, intelligence, etc.; or, we can continue to struggle in being good enough for God. It is impossible to be good enough for God. We must let God work His Goodness through us if we want to experience His Goodness at all. Just like when we were saved, so in every other area of life, we cannot have God's results if we mix in our efforts.

That's offensive to our self, isn't it? Self *demand*s to be included. But, until we let go and let Jesus take over, we cannot *know* the fullness of God's Grace in our lives.

His Healing is within you. His wisdom is within you. His Righteousness is within you. His Goodness is within you.

Our hope now is to learn how to live life from the inside out! *There's a river of life flowing out of me*. Let's focus on living in the river.

Aren't the scriptural word pictures for the Holy Spirit interesting? Wind. River. Fire. Dove.

Have you ever considered how many radio frequencies are broadcasting simultaneously right where you are? (If not, take a moment to run through the

radio dial and remind yourself of how many stations are broadcasting: AM, FM, Satellite, Cellular phone, police radio, ham radio, shortwave, etc.)

Have you considered how radio broadcast waves can travel right through solid material? Radio waves can go through your body. They go through "solid" walls.

And, there are so many frequencies broadcasting at the same time! Each one unnoticed until .. until what? They are all unnoticed until there is a *receiver* tuned to the correct frequency that turns that broadcast into audible and intelligent sound!

Now, how can you have the "frequency" of the Holy Spirit abiding in you and not notice Him? I just told you!

Your heart must be *enlightened*<sup>6</sup> (tuned) to His "frequency"! You can choose to soften your heart to the voice of His Spirit, or you can choose to harden your heart toward Him and soften it to your five senses and the voice of your own self.

Tune in, tune out. In order to come to a place of nothingness, we must choose to tune out toward our self and our senses, and open up to His Spirit moving within us.

*Where* the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty!<sup>7</sup> Where is the Spirit of the Lord? Is He in lust? Is He in gossip? Is He in drunkenness? Is He in jealousy? Is He in servitude to Money? NO!

**Gal 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. **26** Let us stop being arrogant, provoking one another and envying one another.

So, the Spirit is in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. *There* is liberty and freedom! *There* is power. *There* is life.

Let's step into the River.

Praise His Name.

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<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 1.18

<sup>7</sup> 2Co 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Lord's Spirit is, there is freedom.