

Powered by grace

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Introduction

For the Christian there is nothing more important than grace.

SAVED - 'for by grace you have been saved through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' Ephesians 2:8

JUSTIFIED – 'being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' Romans 3:24

HELP IN TIME OF NEED – 'let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' Hebrews 4:16

REIGN IN LIFE – 'those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.' Romans 5:17

SERVICE - 'let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.' Hebrews 12:28

For ICCC grace underpins everything. The plantation spoken of in the original prophecy and, the purpose of ICCC in being a place of safety, is worked out in the power of grace. The Transformed Working Life teaching developed by ICCC is based on the grace of God, not on developing our efforts, and is worked out as we align ourselves with grace and truth.

1 Definition

Grace is unmerited favour bestowed on the children of God.

Unmerited favour is the power that marks out God's children from the world.

Grace is seen in various scriptures for example:

Grace says - 'and we know that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.' Romans 8:28

Grace says – 'Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think according to His power that works in us' Ephesians 3:20

Grace says – 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' Hebrews 13:5

Grace says – 'you were grafted in among them and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the Olive tree.' Romans 11:17

..... and much, much more.

In this paper we will see that grace is the power of God available to motivate and activate the spirit filled Christian life.

2 The basis of grace and the mystery

Grace comes by Jesus Christ.

‘For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’ John 1:17

Reconciliation of man to God could not be achieved through the law, which acted as a tutor, showing us the need for deliverance from the penalties we richly deserved. Jesus took those penalties upon Himself and in so doing fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law. Taking the penalty due to you and me He gave us instead His righteousness.

Grace - He has given us the gift of righteousness. (Explained by Paul in Romans 5:12-21.) We have been given the gift of righteousness, right standing with God, hence we can come boldly before Him. Paul explains that this gift comes through the one Man, Jesus Christ.

This is amazing grace – in the form of the Holy Spirit, God, Himself has taken up residence in my reborn human spirit *, and He says, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ (Hebrews 13:5)

Grace is strongly linked to righteousness. Grace having made me righteous motivates me to choose to love Jesus, and that’s what its all about. Love for Jesus motivates me to want more and more to live out a righteous life.

The basis, the foundation of grace, is Jesus.

* ‘Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water [natural birth] and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh [natural birth] is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you “You must be born again”’ Jesus speaking in John 3:5-7.

The mystery revealed

Until it was revealed by Paul there was a mystery which, Romans 16:25 tells us, was hidden since the world began:

‘Now to him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith.’ Romans 16:25-6

Understanding this mystery is the very basis upon which the grace of God functions in and for the believer. For that reason we will need to examine and understand it.

First - 'mystery' means secret. That means it is unknown until Paul reveals it.

Then - that means it is not shown in the Old Testament.

So what did Paul reveal? We find it explained in Paul's letter to the Ephesians where the word mystery appears a number of times.

The first revelation.

Chapters 1 and 2 explain that:

(In God's foreknowledge – Romans 8:29) we are predestined to adoption as sons. (See Inherent Power in the TWL series)

We have redemption through His blood

We have obtained an inheritance

We been sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance until the final redemption.

We are His inheritance.

Mighty power is at work toward us who believe

The same power that raised Christ from the dead and now seats us in heavenly places in Him

So that exceeding riches of His grace may be shown to us

We are His workmanship

He has prepared good works for us to walk in

That now there in a new 'race' – neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christians

The second revelation

Chapter 3 explains that:

It is God's intention that this mighty power demonstrates to principalities and powers His manifold wisdom

We are to be strengthened in the inner man

That Christ is to dwell in our hearts

That He has unmeasurable love for us

The third revelation

Chapter 5 explains that:

Our relationship with Jesus is like that between husband and wife. Its likened to marriage in which it is His responsibility to sanctify and cleanse His bride by the washing of water by the word.

In this scenario we (as the betrothed wife) are required to submit to and to revere our husband.

The fourth revelation

Chapter 6 Paul urges us 'be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might:'

We are able to stand against the works of the devil. Check out your equipment – its all defensive. Stand, do not take things lying down!

For the final blow against the devil's wiles use the sword of the Spirit, a short dagger for infighting – which is the rhema word of God - Just as Jesus did when tempted in the wilderness by the devil. (Matthew 4) See 'Be strong in the battle' in the TWL series for more.

To summarise:

This is the New Covenant – The Holy Spirit takes up residence within the born again believer, bringing unlimited grace and power. Born again believers form the body of Christ on earth, designed to demonstrate God's wisdom to the enemy. The body of Christ is designed to act in the same way as the Head – by seeing and hearing what the Father is doing and being the channel that by His Spirit accomplishes that on earth.

In a few words – the mystery is the body of Christ.

(Later on the body of Christ becomes the bride of Christ. So the earthly manifestation is as His body whilst He, the head, is seated with the Father in heaven. The heavenly manifestation will be as His bride, the body having fulfilled its purpose on earth.)

3 Like a two sided coin

‘For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.’ John 1:17

It’s a two sided coin - its grace and truth that come through Jesus Christ. Its rather like a coin or a bank note – both sides need to be present and correct. A coin or bank note with only one side has no effective value.

Therefore we should give the same attention to both – the grace of God is amazing. The grace of God is a powerful force. The grace of God is His chosen method for dealing with His children at this time*.

Grace and truth ‘live’ together.

Obtaining a good and full understanding of the truth can be a lifetime’s journey. The Lord expects us to act within the truth we have received. Last chapter we saw the revealing of the mystery – Christ in you the hope of glory! Paul immediately went on to say, therefore, or because of this wonderful truth now revealed to you, -go on, do this:

Put on the new man and put off the old ways

Do not grieve the Spirit by any sort of unrighteous behaviour

Walk in love

Walk in light – find out what is acceptable to the Lord (Ephesians 5:10)

Walk in wisdom

Have godly and righteous relationships in the family and at work

.... So that you can stand!

In my own experience I have found the following regular prayers most beneficial:

‘Holy Spirit fill me with more and more love for Jesus.’ (Fulfilling the first commandment to love the Lord your God)

‘Holy Spirit lead me into more and more truth.’ (Putting myself in agreement with Jesus promise that the Spirit would lead us into all truth.)

Its well to remember that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) who works in us to change us from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). Its an ongoing process – don’t loose heart, the process will be completed, we will be conformed to the image of Jesus. It’s so much easier when we fully cooperate with the Spirit as He does His work in us.

* 'if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me [Paul] for you.' Ephesians 3:2 -

'dispensation,' means the 'house rules' by which the Lord manages His people. These 'house rules' are different at different times. Today, under the New Covenant, we live in the age of grace.

[For further appreciation of the doctrine of dispensations make a study of the food rules through Old and New Testaments and you will find they change a number of times as the dispensation changes.]

4 Grace times 5

1 Common grace

Grace that benefits all mankind, whether they believe in the Lord or not. Another name would be 'creation grace.' The sun shines on everybody. Creation is so magnificent that 'since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' (Romans 1:20) Eventually the world will be judged and the existence of common, creation grace will leave mankind with no excuse for unbelief.

2 Grace that follows truth

This is vital for our walk on earth. We cannot separate grace and truth. Look at Jesus, 'the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth.**' 'and of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.' (John 1:14, 16) 'Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life.' (John 14:6.)

Jesus is the way, the road ahead. Jesus is truth. Jesus is grace. We are to be like Him. He came as the light to the world, now He tells us, 'you are the light of the world.' As He is so are we in the world. He is righteous we are made righteous - outcome of grace and truth together is righteousness.

Essential understanding – grace and truth go together.

3 Specific grace

The grace the Holy Spirit brings through His gifts –explained in 1 Corinthians 12.

4 Answer grace

We pray. The Lord answers. Grace that sustains - 'Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.' (Philippians 4:6) Sometimes the answer will be instructions to be followed, sometimes we just find the request fulfilled, sometimes we have to let patience do its work in us (James 1:4). No answer – perhaps we were asking for the wrong thing or maybe at the wrong time. (James 4:3)

5 Extravagant grace

Sometimes God just chooses to do something, because He chooses to do it.

Catch the wind

There is an important principal mentioned in Ephesians 2:10

'For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.'

Here we can establish that God has specific plans for each believer. It is logical to think that God's grace will manifest to the greatest degree when we walk in that which He has prepared. The same logic would say, if we go our own way, or indeed the way of the world, then the manifestation of God's grace will be limited.

Jesus likens the Spirit to the wind. The wind blows where it wishes. It is again logical, in our context, to expect the wind (Spirit) to wish to blow where it (He) is most comfortable.

(Hence our cover picture. The windmill needs the wind otherwise it is totally unfruitful.)

5 The importance of truth and the position of The Law

The Law, given by God, through Moses, for the Jewish nation.

Given with promise of immense blessing if kept and dire consequences if broken.
(Deuteronomy 28)

Problem - mankind is fallen and has no chance whatsoever of keeping the law ... so
... Paul to the Galatians (3:24) makes it's purpose clear - 'the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ.'

Problem - the early church was made up of myriads of Jews keen to keep the law. (Acts 21:20)

... the Jews then had to be dispersed, and gentiles were drawn in, yet still some converted Jews went about telling Christians they must keep the law. Paul to the Galatians again (3:1-3) 'O foolish Galatians who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. This only I want to learn from you, Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith. Are you so foolish. Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the works of the flesh.' Here we are told law keeping is a work of the flesh!

See the rest of the chapter!

So what is the current position of the law:

Taken away and nailed to a cross. Colossians 2:14

Annulled – Hebrews 7:18 and obsolete – Hebrews 8:13

It is inoperative so far as we are concerned because we are dead to it – Romans 7:1-6.

Abolished (Greek 'katargeo' means rendered inoperative) in His flesh the enmity, that is the law of commandments contained in ordinances Ephesians 2:15

Christ is the end (or fulfilment) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes – Romans 10:4

The law was a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7-18) and by the law is the knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20) it brings wrath (Romans 4:15) it causes sin to abound (Romans 5:20)

The Jerusalem Council settled it - it is not necessary to keep the law - but everyone should: Abstain from things offered to idols; from blood (no black pudding!); from things strangled, and from sexual immorality (fornication – which is illicit intercourse). Acts 15:29.

Danger for us:

We are rendered inoperative so far as Christ is concerned if we try to be justified by keeping the law (Gal 5:4)

Paul wrote to the Galatians - 'you have become estranged [rendered inoperative or idle] from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace.' (5:4)

They were no longer walking in agreement with the revealed truth for the time. Result – they had fallen from grace, no power, no fruit.

Is the law truth - yes indeed truth for the Jewish nation at that time. But the law could not justify, it could only show the need for and point to the coming Messiah. The truth of the law is to believe in the Messiah to come, once He has come the law's job is done. It's rather like a map – it shows the way to the destination, when you have arrived, in this case in believing in Jesus, you no longer have any need for the map and you come into a new and better way. The Galatians were trying self-justification by doing the impossible - keeping the law. They had, in their actions, turned away from the truth that they were justified in Christ. Not following the truth grace was forfeit.'

The mystery, kept secret since the world began, revealed by the apostle Paul, was being lost to the Galatians as they drifted back to the Law. The mystery – now those who believe become the body of Christ, made righteous, filled with the Spirit, full of power and love as written to the Ephesians in chapters 1 and 3. This body is designed to walk in a new dimension in all its activities. This body is designed to demonstrate God's manifold wisdom, not by keeping the Law but by walking in the Spirit.

The Galatians had missed the truth. They were now walking along, living life outside of the truth, trying to establish their own righteousness by works of the law and as a result had fallen from grace. Now, in the Kingdom, they were inoperative – no grace, no fruit, no witness.

So what applies to us then? We are the heirs of the New Covenant in which a much better alternative is given to us. The Lord promised Israel and Judah a new covenant in which He would write His law upon their minds and in their hearts. (Jerimiah 31:31-35 – they will come into this promise in due course) We, by believing and trusting Jesus, come into the blessing of that covenant now. The Holy Spirit acts rather like a satnav to highlight the right way as we agree with Him in His process of changing us from one degree of glory to another. The New Covenant has plenty of advice showing us how we should act and what a mature Christian will look like – our part is to put off the old and put on the new. How do we do that? By following the satnav rather than following the flesh.

Jesus redefined the law for us under the New Covenant – 'Love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength,' this is the first commandment. The second is like it 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Mark 12:28-34

Grace is abundant.

John put it like this - 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.' (3 John verse 4)

The scripture promises **immense grace** - 'And God is able to make all grace abound towards you, that you, always having all sufficiency, in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.' (2 Corinthians 9:18)

Paul's testimony - 'and the grace of our Lord was **exceedingly abundant**, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.' (1 Timothy 1:14)

We are the heirs of grace. 'Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as the weaker vessel, and as being **heirs together of the grace of life**, that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Peter 3:7)

Great grace - 'and with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. **And great grace was upon them all.** (Acts 4:33)

Reign in life - 'for if by one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive [take hold of] **abundance of grace** and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:17)

'Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be **established by grace.**' (Hebrews 13:9)

Truth is vital

We have already seen that the Galatians had fallen from grace by leaving the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus. We see above the advice to husbands - honour your wife. We see in Hebrews establish your heart by grace. We reign in life by the abundance of grace. Life is powered by grace. Grace manifests to the full where truth abounds.

The Galatians had been rendered inoperative in the Kingdom by falling away from truth into error.

So - in life we need to be careful to walk in truth. We can ask the Holy Spirit to fulfil His role by leading us into all truth - 'when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth.' (John 16:13) For me this is a constant prayer - more and more truth please Holy Spirit. Then, of course, we need to walk in the truth - otherwise grace will not fully manifest. We cannot expect the power of heaven to be with us when we walk in error.

One of the most important truths is forgiveness. We have been forgiven all our sins, past, present and future. This is achieved by the sacrifice of Jesus - His blood shed for us at Calvary. Therefore we should forgive men their trespasses (blunders) against us - which by comparison are of little account. If we do not then God does not forgive our blunders and grace does not manifest to deal with the situation - having fallen from truth and grace we suffer the consequences.

You want to reign in life, you want the full manifestation of grace, then forgive everyone and everything that has and does come against you.

The same applies to every element of truth –

Don't try to live by the Law as the Galatians did.

Honour your wife.

Don't take brethren to court.

Don't be yoked to an unbeliever.

Pay your taxes.

..... and so on. Because we are stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter 4:10)

OK - sometimes we fail. Its not the end of the story. James, in talking about friendship with the world, which is enmity with God, says nevertheless more grace is available, therefore submit to God. (from James 4:4-7)

'When we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' (1 John 1:9)

Clean start! -again and again and again. The Holy Spirit, our 'satnav' will alert us, convict us where necessary, and set us upright again.

Its rock or sand!

Matthew 7:24-27: The parable of the wise and foolish builders is very instructive:

'Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rains descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.'

The sayings of Jesus. –in the Greek the word for sayings is logos. Jesus is the logos made flesh (John 1:14) Jesus is the full revelation of God in bodily form (Colossians 2:9)

So when we talk about applying the sayings of Jesus we are talking about applying the full revelation of God. When Jesus likens the wise man to the one who built on rock He is telling us to apply all the truth to life. Build your life on the revealed truth and you will still stand when the storms beat against you. Don't apply this truth to life and when the storms come you will fall.

As we have been seeing, the grace of God accompanies truth. 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also

we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' (Romans 5:1-2)

So it's black and white. Apply the truth to your everyday life and activity. Live out righteousness.

Grace and truth go together - there is no grace to support error. We cannot deliberately take a course of action which is contrary to the written instructions of the New Covenant and expect the Lord to put the power of His grace behind that action. Grace will come when we repent of error. There is grace to help in our time of need when we align our actions with the truth of the word of God.

If we inadvertently err God is gracious and it will become apparent as the spirit within us gently brings correction. This is where the prayer, 'Holy Spirit fill me with more and more truth,' is important as part of our relationship with Him.

6 Kingdom economics

Worldly economics recognises various types of capital (resources):

Human resources - people (including intellectual resources)

Social resources – what people can achieve when they co-operate and work together.

Natural resources - provided by the earth

Manufactured resources - things made by man to enhance output

Financial resources – the ‘oil’ in the wheels that enables commerce in the world system.

In the world these things are put to use to create wealth. Unfortunately the fallen nature of man means there is extensive corruption and greed which pollutes the result. That which God provided for a blessing to mankind becomes abused and perverted.

Worldly economics misses one vital element -

POWER, that is God’s power expressed in GRACE.

In Kingdom economics GRACE is the POWER of God to pour unlimited favour on His children. It is abundant. It is available. It knows no limits. Grace thrives in truth.

Grace will abound where truth abounds. Truth and grace come by Jesus Christ. They come together. They are given by God for us to reign in this life. This is Kingdom economics - yes, all the items listed as worldly are relevant to our life on earth - yet we have much, much more. We can walk in the good works that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10) and experience the power of grace as it manifests in our day to day and working lives.

This is part of the overall truth - God has prepared good works for us. As we walk in those good works we can anticipate the exceeding riches of His grace.

Grace and truth go together.

Kingdom economics and the doctrine of favour.

We expect grace to work in our lives because of the doctrine of favour, to which we alluded in the definition of grace.

‘Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.’ Ephesians 3:20

We have favour with God because we have been grafted into the root of His favour – this is explained in Romans 11 where Paul states in verse 17 that we, as Gentiles, have been grafted into the olive tree to become partakers of the fatness of the root. This olive tree represents God’s abundant blessing, His favour. Israel, broken off because of unbelief can be

grafted back in again – surely a prophetic statement of what will come to pass at some future date.

We are favoured because of our position in Christ –

‘Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him.’ Matthew 7:7-11

Matthew, having established our right as children of God to ask of Him what we need, goes on to say - ‘Therefore whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.’ Which leads us to our next chapter

7 The Kingdom in action - Generosity.

'Give and it will be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.' (Luke 6:38.)

Here is truth - be very generous. Give, not under the compulsion of law, not out of some perceived necessity, give cheerfully out of generosity and freewill, as led by the 'satnav,' of the Holy Spirit.

What will happen - grace will inhabit your generosity and grace will be poured back to you using the same measure. –

'He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.' (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

This is Kingdom economics in action!

May God's grace abound towards you, lift you up, and enable you to reign in life.

Appendix

Transformed Working life

The teaching group of ICCC have developed the TWL program to equip us to be able to increasingly understand and apply the truth thus walking in the fullness of grace and righteousness. In the days ahead this becomes more and more important. As the storms increase we need to be able to stand. We can only build on rock – sand will not do.

Transformed Working Life is available as live sessions, on DVD, in depth in teaching booklets available as PDF downloads, and in study notes.

The following subjects are covered in depth in the teaching booklets already approved by the teaching committee and published by ICCC

Inherent Power

No one can serve two masters

Hearing God Speak

Hope

Faith or presumption

Be strong in the battle

Anointing

Working from rest

Renewing the mind

Associated booklets specially written for ICCC:

Stand tall – take your position

Works of power - now is the time

Fruitfulness – the goal of our faith