***Grace

Colossians 1:1-2

COL-016***

We are studying Colossians 1:1-2, "The Salutation," segment number 16.

The apostle Paul addresses the letter to the Colossian Christians who are both, he says, "In Christ," which is the church universal; and, "In Colossae," the local church. Paul writes with the authority of an apostle from God, and he includes greetings from his associate Timothy.

So, we read, "Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae." Paul thus sets the perspective of his instruction in this book as being to a very special body of believers who are living during a very special age, the dispensation of the church. The church began on a day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and it will be completed with the rapture event. Christians form the royal family of God, and they possess a unique relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ as His body and His bride.

This is unique because this was never true of any saints of the Old Testament era, or of generations past, nor will it ever be true of those after we are gone. The church will reign with the Lord Jesus Christ during His millennial kingdom In the future. Christians have the capacity to know God through doctrine, and to produce divine good works for eternal rewards through the Holy Spirit who indwells them. Every Christian has full capacity to rise to his maximum position as a prince or princess in the family of God. Nobody has to be groveling around as a pathetic commoner. That is a choice that we make. And when we get our eyes off the Lord, and on ourselves, we will become just one of the common masses. But we are the royal family of God, and we have the capacity to know Him. We have the capacity to learn doctrine. We have the capacity to stay in temporal fellowship by confessing our sins. And we have the capacity for the power of God to work with us, and to guide us, and sustain us in a moment-by-moment basis.

Now, Satan of course, constantly seeks to make spiritual casualties of Christians, so as to incapacitate them in the angelic warfare. And it does not give us any pleasure to look about us and to see when this happens to Christians. We are all the poorer for it, and the greatest tragedy is that their poverty will continue with them spiritually for all eternity. The local church organization, of course, is responsible for training believers for spiritual combat, and for godly living by feeding them the spiritual food of doctrine. The individual Christian, however, is his own priest, and he is responsible for how he chooses to use his spiritual training in God's service, and how he lives daily. We have no one to blame for our troubles but ourselves. Once we have been oriented to the Word of God; to the grace of God; and, to the functioning of the principles of the Christian life, we have no one to blame but ourselves, for the times when we fall off into the valley of despair, and of sin, and of failures, and of disasters, instead of being up there on the mountain peaks of great success.

The apostle Paul now closes this salutation at the end of verse 2 with a brief prayer for the Colossian Christians. And the first word that he utters in that prayer is the great explosive word of all the Scripture. This is a word that we pass over so quickly and so lightly. Paul says, "Grace:" "Grace to you, and peace from God our Father. The word "grace" looks like this in a Greek Bible. It's the Greek word C H A R I S "charis" (khar'-ece). This word means "God's unmerited favor, sovereignly bestowed on those who deserve the very opposite." It is the great favor of God, which He is not obliged to bestow. He decides on His own to do it, towards certain individuals, and not only does He bestow that on individuals by His choosing, but those who get it don't deserve it, and they never can deserve it. They never can earn it. Grace cannot be earned. There is no such thing as the means of grace. There is no such thing as: "If I do this, then I get the grace of God." If you do this to get it, it is no longer grace.

I was reared in a denomination which taught us that there were certain things which are the means to the grace of God. If you read the Bible, you'll get the grace of God. If you pray, you'll get the grace of God. If you behave yourself, you'll get the grace of God. If you give your offerings, you'll get the grace of God. And all of that is completely false. Grace is what God chooses on His own to do to those who don't deserve it.

Now if you understand that, then you'll understand a great deal of what God does, such that you wonder why He would do it. And indeed, the average person does wonder why God would do certain things. You think that people don't deserve it, and that they shouldn't be treated with this kind of kindness. And that's what the Bible calls it. It calls it "the kindness of God." These debates that you have with those dull-headed, religious relatives you have, who can't believe that, if God saves them, they can always count on going to heaven after that. They can't believe that God could keep them secure in something that is so important to them. They can't believe that they can be saved apart from any human doing whatsoever. And they can be the rottenness person on the face of the earth, and that grace is still extended to them. So, when you debate with these people, you must understand they don't know what the word "grace" means.

So, be sure that it is very clear to you. Grace connotes a free gift from God to the undeserving. The word "grace" means "free." It is a free gift to the undeserving. The opposite of grace is earning something by good works to pay for it. Now, the minute you have offered something in payment for anything to God, you are not dealing on a grace basis. God cannot give you something by grace if you pay Him for it. These two principles cannot be mixed, furthermore, in any way. They are mutually exclusive. And that is a great principle. If you have not learned it, then learn it right now. That will make it worth all your time such that you came out this morning, to know that you cannot mix grace and works in any degree whatsoever.

**Grace Alone**

Evidence number one: In Ephesians 2:8-9, God the Holy Spirit says "For by grace you have been saved through faith." It is a gift from God that you have received. It has been through faith in Jesus Christ as the One who has covered your sins: "And that." The word "that" refers to the salvation that you have received: "Not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Now move over to Romans 4:4. We are save on the basis of a grace gift from God. The apostle Paul says this in another way. Here he is speaking about this man Abraham, to whom God came and gave the gospel, and offered to save him. And Abraham, the pagan, believed. And the Bible says, "It was reckoned to him as righteousness." Romans 4:4 says, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due." When you spend your week working for your employer, you do not consider your paycheck a grace act from him. You do not consider your paycheck a gift from him. That's something that you deserve. That's something that he owes you. He's not just deciding out of kindness to do that.

Verse 5 says, "But to one who does not work, but believes in Him Who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness." And you put those two verses together. Verse 4 says that works is one thing you deserve. Verse 5 says, "Grace is a different thing that you don't deserve, but it comes as a free gift." The two cannot be mixed.

Now the clincher for this is in Romans 11:6. It tells us what God does in His salvation: "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise, grace is no longer grace." Now, you tell me what that verse means. If it is by grace that we are saved, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. What that verse is telling you is that you trust in Christ as savior, you say, and then you offer your water baptism as part of salvation. You have interjected a human work element. And what you have done is neutralized the basis of God's grace. And God cannot give you salvation if you have interjected a payment.

Now that's very clear. The same thing is on a human level. If I want to give you a gift of something, and you insist in paying me something for it, then it's no longer a gift. You have denied me the gift basis. You have denied me to give you something without charge. So, this verse says that once you bring in any element of works, you're out of it.

Now, what you must see there is something that is very sobering. Think of all those denominations that teach people that if you do not have water baptism, you will not go to heaven. Do you realize what they have done? They talk about Christ as Savior. They praise Him. They worship Him. They give Him their resources for the work of their ministries. And yet, they have offered their water baptism, and now they have denied God the grace basis of salvation, and they're not saved. Or they're told that they must go through sacraments, such as in Roman Catholicism. You must go through these steps that will prove you worthy of receiving the merit of Christ. And what that does is ensures that anybody who follows that plan will not go to heaven. And if that rattles your cage, don't blame me. I've shown you the verses. You tell me what they mean if they don't mean that. They're mutually exclusive.

Furthermore, the system of proving yourself worthy in any way, as Mormonism demands of people, is to ensure that you'll be in the lake of fire forever. So, when Paul greets these people, and says, "Grace," he is saying something that is fraught with enormous importance. And indeed, this is the great thing that he hopes for them, because the grace of God is expressed in a saving work of Jesus Christ for the sinner who trusts in Christ alone for salvation. And if grace is not the approach that you have to God for salvation, you cannot be saved. Salvation in every dispensation, from Adam on, is based on the principle of grace as a free gift from God.

The gospel for the good news of salvation, therefore, is called, in Acts 20:24, "The gospel of the grace of God." Paul says, "But I do not consider my life of any account, as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and a ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly to the gospel of the grace of God." Paul said, "All I live for: this is my calling; and, this is my life – grace." And the core principle of grace is salvation by the grace of God. So, the gospel that he preached (the good news) was the good news of being saved as a gift from God without any works.

Now, he had a lot of trouble with the churches in the territory of Galatia, because legalizers had come in there. They had followed in after him. And they said, "Yes, what Paul teaches is very good, but Paul has lost his way. He is not quite oriented to the Word of God, because he has forgotten that you must do something. You males cannot go to heaven unless you have circumcision. You must incorporate these elements of the Mosaic Law as the basis of your salvation. And they were doing exactly what Paul said, that if you do, you will neutralize the basis upon which God can save you. So, when he wrote to these churches in Galatia, to straighten this out, in Galatians 1:6, he says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him Who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel." And this "different" is not a gospel of another variation, or another form of explanation. This is a totally different gospel. How different? Because it has works included: therefore, it's not the gospel. And this gospel will not save you. So, to the Colossian Christians, Paul closes his salutation with a prayer, and the first thing he says is, "God, give these people grace, and help them to understand what it is that you have given to them.

**A Summary of the Principles of Grace**

1. **The Basis of the Cross**

Grace is all that God is free to do for a person on the basis of the cross. It's the work of God on behalf of man from the love of God. Grace is the title for God's plan for mankind. Jesus Christ provided a completed salvation. The Holy Spirit now applies it to individuals – individuals of God's choosing. And God the Father provides blessings of salvation in eternity. It's a perfect and a wonderful system, but God is free to do that – to express this kind of grace because Christ has met the big problem of human sin.

1. **Who God is**

Grace depends on Who and What God is. And here's where grace is contaminated. Grace is based on the essence, or character, of God, particularly the qualities of God's absolute righteousness and God's absolute justice. No matter how much God would want to save any of us, He cannot ignore His righteousness, which says that it is wrong to let a sinner into heaven; and, He cannot ignore His justice, which says that the person who has sinned has to pay the price. You cannot go to heaven if you are a sinner, and you cannot go there unless you've paid the price for your sin, and the price is death.

**Imputation**

So God, in order to be true to His character, has to provide the basis to preserve His righteousness and to satisfy His justice. And He does that through the death of Christ. Now He can impute to the believing sinner absolute righteousness. You're not just yourself anymore, once you trust in Christ as savior. You now are as perfect as Jesus Christ: in your character; in your temperament; and, in your spiritual condition. You are absolute righteousness.

**Propitiation**

Furthermore, the justice of God has been propitiated. That means "satisfied." God's demand for the death penalty has been met.

So, grace depends on Who and What God is. It never depends on man's character. It never depends upon your proving yourself worthy. This is so important for you to understand. When you understand grace, and you hear some sincere Mormon say, "Yes, we must go through this life and live a moral life to prove ourselves worthy of exaltation to heaven," the red flags go up, and you know that this person has been duped by Satan. Grace does not demand anything from the sinner. You don't try to prove yourself worthy. You can't do it.

1. **Non-Meritorious**

Grace is God doing the work of divine good, and man receiving it in a non-meritorious manner. When we say non-meritorious, we mean that faith is not a work. Faith is just admitting that God is not lying. The opposite of divine good work is human good work, or legalism – religion, where man does the work in order to get the credit. Human good, which is what is usually offered to God for salvation (to secure salvation blessing) is useless. All human good – the best of it is tainted by the sin nature. Therefore, it is useless. And it is destructive. Most people understand that sin that comes from the sin nature is bad. It is a little tricky for them to understand that, when the sin nature regurgitates out human good, that it's also vile and bad, because it looks better. It has a different appearance to it.

Those of you who have ever climbed in the Rocky Mountain National Park, especially if you've been up to Boulder field, at the base of the Long's peak – there are patches of snow there. And as you look at the snow, the snow, in certain patches, is red. And it's called watermelon snow. You get up, and you sniff, and it smells like watermelon. You put it in your mouth, and it tastes like watermelon. But it's poison. We've lost a lot of people on trip camp who have tasted the watermelon snow. No, the watermelon snow is deceptive. It seems like it is so attractive, and it's so nice, and it's so cool. It's deadly! And human good is like that. It looks great, but it's deadly.

This is what human governments do. They gather together, and they vomit out all kinds of human good for society that, after a while, they discover as poison. All the things that they think they can do for the human race, which is being done in the wrong way, proves to be poison. So, grace is God producing genuine human good so that you have a basis for salvation.

1. **Sanctification**

Grace provides sanctification; that is, it makes a person like Jesus Christ. Sanctification, first of all, is positional sanctification. That means you are united to Jesus Christ in your position, so you possess all that He is and all that He does. Secondly, you have experiential sanctification, where the Holy Spirit leads you day-by-day. He's in control of your life, and He transforms you into the character of Jesus Christ. And then there is ultimate sanctification, that we all look forward to – a resurrected body glorified like that of Jesus Christ, minus the sin nature.

1. **Salvation**

Every believer has tasted the kindness of grace at salvation. 1 Peter 2:3 says, "If you have tasted the kindness of the Lord." Now, you may know, and learn more or less about grace after salvation. That depends. But you do enter the Christian life with a big dose of the taste of the grace of God. You're a hopeless sinner with a sin nature that can produce nothing that's acceptable to God. The best is tainted. You're in a helpless condition. Your most sincere human efforts will get you nowhere. And suddenly, as Paul says, "What a relief to the person who finds that his sins are no longer attributed to him, but have been laid upon Christ, and he is free from all moral guilt." That is a great sense of relief, and that kindness is our initial experience with the grace of God.

Now, once we are saved, we remain in the grace of God under God's maximum love, no matter what we do after salvation. There's the rub with your relatives. They can't understand how once you're saved, you could degenerate into some sinful pattern, and still be in the family of God. That's because they don't understand how you got there in the first place. You've got there by the grace of God, without any human contamination involved in the process. It's all of God, and none of us. Therefore, what God does is going to be done in a way that it cannot be reversed. A believer is under God's grace whether you choose to live a godly life or an ungodly life, and whether you choose to enjoy the grace of God or not. People who immerse themselves in legalisms, in order to gain God's favor as Christians, have never arisen to their heritage of grace. They don't know what it means to be a member of the body of Christ.

1. **God Waits to Give us Grace**

God is constantly waiting to pour out His grace on every believer. That has been true of God from time immemorial. The prophet Isaiah observed this in Isaiah 30:18-19: "Therefore, the Lord longs to be gracious to you. And therefore, He waits on high to have compassion on you (speaking to Israel here). For the Lord is a God of justice. How blessed are all those who long for Him. O, people of Zion, inhabitants in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry when He hears it. He will answer you." And this, of course, is a great comfort to realize that God is constantly waiting to pour out His grace.

In the New Testament, we had this explicitly brought out by the fact that we are told that confession of our known sins brings us back into God's fellowship and blessing. God's grace is never set aside in dealing with us. We are the ones who choke it off. We are the ones who clamp it off. Whatever great thing you feel that God has placed upon your life; whatever guidance he has given you to do something; whatever hopes; and, whatever goals to aspire to, if it gets cut off, it's because you have crimped off the grace of God, because the grace of God is going to carry you through to the best that God has in mind for you.

1. **Disorientation to Grace**

Disorientation to grace principle is the greatest hazard of the Christian life. And you and I are surrounded by many people, some very close to us, who are disoriented to the grace of God, and that's the greatest tragedy of their lives. Hebrews 12:15 puts it this way: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it, many be defied." Do not get sidetracked from living on the principle of grace. And the principle of grace means, first of all, that you stop trying to be God.

Now, if you're an ex-Mormon, you have a little problem, because you were taught that you were supposed to become a God someday. So, you try to act like a God in dealing with other people. But grace says, "Butt out of other people's lives." Grace says, "Live and let live." Grace says, "Let God be God." You're not God, and you're not going to exercise these judgments over other people. It is none of your business. Your business is to take care of yourself; to take care of your own priesthood; and, to take care of your own standing before God. And knowing most of you very well, that's a day-and-night job for you. You don't need to get occupied with trying to take care of somebody else's problems. Grace means to let God resolve it.

Are there problems? Yes. Do some people need to be jerked up and straightened up? You betcha they do. And when they become a threat to our ministry, and to our local organizational objectives, then we have to deal with them. But other than that, we leave it to God to deal with them. We leave it to Him to resolve the problem. God's grace is there to deal with those who become disoriented to that principle.

1. **The Sole Basis for Salvation**

Grace is the sole basis for salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 4:4, Romans 5:20, Psalm 103:8-12). The Old Testament was also a grace basis of salvation. Sometimes people get confused and think that in the Old Testament you got saved by works. That's not true. It was always by the grace of God. Psalm 103:8-10, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger; and, abounding in loving kindness. He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. He has not dealt with us according to our sins." That's grace: "Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." That's grace: "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving-kindness" (the Old Testament word for 'grace') toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, He has removed our transgressions from us." That's grace.

The Old Testament people (the Jews) had no excuse for not understanding salvation by the grace of God. That passage alone made it very clear, along with numerous others, that their work system was a way of life. But their salvation system was a way of faith in the coming Messiah as Savior. And yet, it is so hard for people to understand the principle of grace, and to believe it. It is very hard for people to be grace-oriented. They just don't know how to move through life on a very easy keel. And when you have to start screaming and yelling, and getting tempered up, and all heated up, just stop and see if you can think of a few of the things you've heard here about the grace of God, and maybe it'll bring you up short, and enable you to act like a member of your royal family.

1. **The Basis for Living the Christian Life**

Grace is the basis for living the Christian life. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that grace is the basis for prayer: "Let us, therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help in time of need." Grace is the basis of prayer. This is why we come to prayer meeting as a group. This is why you pray individually. You draw near with confidence to God's throne of grace, so that there he may receive mercy." And you know that the word "mercy" means "relief for what's hurting you:" your agonies; your sins; and, your problems: "You may find grace to help in time of need." All over this room, there are people who would like to see something happen in their lives. There are things that they would like to ask God to produce. There are things that they would like to see achieved, and that they would like to see accomplished. I'll guarantee you that that which is in the plan and purpose of God, and compatible with His will for you, if you come to this throne of grace, He will hear you. But you must come to it on the basis of nothing from you, but all from God. Don't come to Him with compromises and promises. Don't insult God by bribing Him. Don't say, "Oh God, if You'll do this for me, then I'll do this," because He knows you well enough that you won't do it. And if you do, you won't do it very good, or you won't do it very long. Don't ever tell God that if He gives you this, then, boy, you're going to do this." Just go to Him and say, "I need this grace, and this is what I ask of you."

Grace is also the basis for suffering, the Bible tells us. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, the apostle Paul had a physical ailment that God would not remove: "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, and with difficulties, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." It is the grace of God that carries us through our suffering."

Furthermore, it is the grace of God that releases all the spiritual power within you, and all the spiritual capacity that is potentially within you. Most of us don't realize how great is the capacity of spiritual achievement within you. The capacity of the Spirit of God to a willing heart, and a Christian oriented to the Word of God is a terribly powerful combination. And it is all released when you look to the grace of God to turn it loose in your life. 2 Timothy 2:1: "You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." If you are strong that way, you are really strong. Don't try to be strong by the cleverness of your sin nature, or by the cleverness of how you're going to put things together, and how you're going to operate, and how you're going to connive and manipulate. Be strong in the thing that will give you constraint: the grace of God.

1. **The Basis for Spiritual Growth**

Grace is the basis for spiritual growth. 2 Peter 3:18" "But grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen." You grow in grace by growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. You grow in your experience with the grace of God as you grow in your knowledge of Him.

**Stability**

How about stability in your life? 1 Peter 5:12 says that this is it: the grace of God. He speaks of: "Silvanus, our faithful brother, for so I regard him. I have written to you briefly exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it." What Paul has taught, he says, that's the grace of God. Stand firm in it. Don't deviate from it.

**The Basis for Daily Christian Service**

Then grace is the basis for daily Christian service. Hebrews 12:28: "Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken (we, the kingdom of salvation), let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe." It is the grace of God that leads me to want to serve Him.

We do not tell you to fill that offering box with your tithes. We tell you to fill that offering box with your grace giving. That is the basis of all service. We do not tell you to sign up for a Christian service ministry here because you owe it to God. We invite you to join because it is a grace opportunity that you may enter. Everything is to be motivated by the grace of God. It is because of what God's grace has done for you that motivates you to put your life on the line for Him.

**Divine Good Production**

It is the grace of God that is the basis of all divine good production. 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And this grace toward me did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them' yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Paul says, "I am what I am by the grace of God." And he takes somewhat of a satisfaction in knowing that there are other people around him who had grace opportunities, and they blew them. They muddled around in their lives. They were up; they were down; they were in; and, they were out. Wouldn't you hate it to be in an operation where you're dependent for your very life upon the people around you, and sometimes they were there, and sometimes they weren't there? And the apostle Paul says that God's grace has carried him through, and that he was always there more than his peers (more than his contemporaries). He took great satisfaction in not waiting for some other Christian to do something that needed to be done. He didn't even say, "Well, hey, I'll do it if you'll match it." He was always there saying, "I'm going to do it, and I'm going to do it in a supreme way. So, when it's through, I'm heading shoulders above the rest of you. You can catch up with me if you want to. You can come in there if you want to. But by George, I'm not standing around waiting for you to make a move, so that I can make a move. My move is because you are My God, and I love You for what You have done for me. And your grace is going to carry me through to execute what You've laid upon my heart to do. And I don't need any other cotton-pickin' human being to help me, or to encourage me to be able to achieve it."

1. **Implications**

The implications of the grace doctrine of salvation. God is perfect. Therefore, His plan is perfect. A perfect salvation plan comes only from a perfect God, with no human help. Man is not perfect. So, if any part of God's plan of salvation depends on man, God's plan is no longer perfect. Got the logic? God is perfect. And only He is perfect. And only He can create a perfect plan of salvation. Man is imperfect. If man is involved in any part of the salvation process, you have got an imperfection interjected, and the system is now flawed. Therefore, grace excludes all human good. That's a weak link. And God will have nothing to do with it. That's what your relatives can't understand – that that's what grace means. Grace is a protective policy. It's an insurance that the salvation you have will not prove to be flawed.

We can't begin to put ourselves in the place of somebody who dies in one of these systems that has injected some work element into the process of salvation. They die, and they open their eyes on the other side, and there they are: "My God – in Hades. And there are all the flames and tortures like the story of Lazarus and the rich man. How did this happen? I thought I had an insurance policy." No you didn't. You didn't have a policy that ensured that you were going to be saved. What you did was one that interjected you as a human being, and that spoiled at all.

It is impossible for a believer to get outside of the grace of God once he is saved. You will be within the grace of God either in blessing, or you'll be in the grace of God in discipline. That's what your relatives don't understand. You don't get away with murder just because your salvation is secure and permanent. If you deviate from the course of godliness (the course of the will of God), then your life will begin shriveling up. Then the things that you need will not be there, and the things you hoped for are falling apart. And when you get back on track, then God will take that discipline off of you, and He will put blessing back on you. And then the discipline will turn to blessing.

1. **Mental Attitude Sins**

Grace is the opposite of all mental attitude sins. And it is a mental attitude sin when you're so proud that you reject grace as the way of salvation. You don't think that it's just that simple, and that easy. It is just a gift that God gives. It is the pride of the believer who rejects eternal security. Why does he do that? Because he's got the gall to think that he can perform a sin that God can't deal with. Please understand that when people don't think you're secure for all eternity in your salvation – a salvation that God says that He alone put together, and He alone gives you, it's because you are telling him that you're clever enough and vile enough to come up with something that He can't cover. It's the pride of the believer who succumbs to the pressures of adversity. And when adversity comes, you think that your suffering is not in the plan of God, or you think that your suffering is greater than that of others.

Many Christians talk a good talk. Many Christians think that they are very firm and strong – good soldiers of Jesus Christ. But when they get hit with the suffering, especially one like Paul had, physically, that couldn't be removed, and it was always there, an irritating burden, that's when they discover whether the mental attitude sin of resentment is there, or whether they really are operating on grace. When you resent what God has brought into your life, instead of taking it in stride, and taking it one step at a time, and taking it in the grace of God all the way, then you're going to come down. This is the mental attitude sin of the believer with his pseudo spirituality – the sweetness-and-light gang. They think that their morality; that their works; that their taboos; and, that their human good are of more value than the plan of the grace of God.

Finally, there's the mental attitude sin of the pride of the believer who likes to think with his emotions. He thinks that his ecstatic feelings are more real than Bible doctrine. And that's why you must understand the principles of the Word of God. As television religious programs are filled with prominent, important people from all walks of life, who are spewing out their disorientation. I remember the singer Pat Boone, on one occasion, was speaking with one of the high leaders of the charismatic movement. And they were reminiscing of what God has been doing for them. And then Pat leans over and says, "Isn't it wonderful that before we had the baptism of the Holy Spirit, all we had was doctrine?" I said, "Oh, what a wonderful insight, Pat. You have just shown how abysmally ignorant you are of spiritual things, and yet you consider yourself, in the charismatic movement, to be the preeminence – the quintessential quality of spirituality, when you're really in the backwaters of ignorance.

Doctrine is our life. Doctrine is where it's all at. And when we understand the doctrine of the grace of God, then there is nothing to hold us back. We can take the high points; and, we can take the low points. And we will never be deceived by somebody with a quick tongue and a clever phrase, and who carries some kind of impressive stature in the eyes of the world.

One of our friends from California called me. She was distressed over problems she is having with her landlady, and the difficulties of the people in her church who were critical of her, because of her not wanting to do certain things that she didn't feel she should do, or a ministry she shouldn't carry. And finally, I said, "Let me tell you something. Here's what helps me. I'm yet trying to find a human being that is superior to myself. And I search daily with my little lantern, . . . trying to find someone who is smarter than I am; someone who's better looking; someone who has more perception; someone who has more insights; someone who can decide things better; or, someone who has more sterling qualities." And I said, "I've been a total failure in that research, because so far, all I have found is that everything is out there are just worms like myself."

She laughed and said, "Oh, Dr. Danish, that is so great." What I was trying to tell her was to get off letting people intimidate you. They're not all that hot. They're just worms, and you don't know all the dirt. Now, in a worm, you can. I've studied worms. You can see the dirt going through a worm. But Christians are taught to put on a front. They're taught to be deceptive. They're taught to act in a certain way when they're in church. But don't let anybody intimidate you.

This is what Paul said to Timothy. He said, "Timothy, you're my young man. You're my associate. They're going to jump on you now after I'm gone, because: who are you kid? Don't let anybody intimidate you, Timothy. Stand by the doctrine you have stood by. Stay by the gifts that have been laid on you with a laying on of hands of the elders, recognizing your call to the gospel ministry, and you sound forth the Word of God, and sound it forth boldly in season. And you be an example. Do not be intimidated by those who would like to bring you down, because they don't know the grace of God, and you do. And the grace of God has made us all equal at the foot of the cross. So, act like what you are – a member of that royal family of the living God."

Thank you, Father, for this time in the Word. And we pray for Your guidance to think of these very deep things that we have, and to incorporate them in our experience/ May we metabolize them spiritually? May the words be those that only the Holy Spirit can now convert into qualities in our lives? We pray that those little tinges of resistance that kept popping into us as we listened today, along the way, we would admit to ourselves that they are signals that we're not quite ready to be fully grace-oriented people. Change us for Jesus' sake, we pray. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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