***Frustrating the Grace of God, No. 7

Grace and Faith vs. Works - CSP007***

"For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. But false prophets also rose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves, and many will follow their sensuality. Because of them, the way of truth will be maligned, and in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their judgment from long ago is not idle. Their destruction is not asleep."

We are studying frustrating the grace of God, segment number seven. At the heart of the Old Testament way of life was the Mosaic Law. The law, which was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, expressed the absolute righteousness of God's character. This standard of absolute righteousness was the requirement for a Jew to receive eternal life in heaven. Therefore, to go to heaven, the Jew was told he had to obey all 613 laws expressing the absolute righteousness of God. He had to obey those perfectly all the time. This was not humanly possible, since by nature, man is sinful, and he is controlled by an old sin nature which he has inherited from Adam.

Thus we read in Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned." Why do babies die before they have reached an age of accountability where they can be accused of having moral guilt because they sin? They die because they sinned in Adam, and in Adam we all die. We all, being in him (descended from him), have carried the guilt that he brought upon himself and the human race through his sin in the Garden of Eden. Romans 5:15 says, "But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one (the man, Adam), the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man Jesus Christ abound to the many."

God's way of dealing with us in this age is grace. The usual thing for Christians to do with that is to frustrate it, not allowing the grace of God to have its magnificent fruition in our lives. We are so attached to the world system. We are so enslaved to the sin nature, and all of its of its lusts, that we never can rise to the level that is ours in Christ Jesus, of being a prince and a princess in the royal family in the fullest sense of those words.

Furthermore, in Romans 5:17-19, this is clarified for us – why the Jew could not keep those rules and thus merit eternal life: "For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more, those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ." So then, as through one (Adam's) transgression, there resulted condemnation to all men; even so, through the one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to all men. "For as through the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners; even so, through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous."

So while the Mosaic Law clearly portrayed the righteous standard which God required for entrance into heaven, it simply could not be obeyed. Sinful humanity could not rise to obedience of these laws. Romans 7:12-14: "So then the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore, did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be. Rather, it was sin in order that it might be shown to be sin by affecting my death through that which is good; that through the commandment, sin might become utterly sinful."

The Mosaic Law showed how rotten man is, and how rotten sinfulness is. The Mosaic Law never was intended for people to be saved. Yet people to this day think they can be saved by keeping rules. The Jews think they're going to heaven by keeping the rules of the Mosaic Law. Verse 14 says, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of flesh (of a sin nature), sold into bondage to the sin nature."

So man found himself in this hopeless situation faced by the human race of incapacity to qualify ourselves for entrance into heaven. Into this hopeless situation came the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, on the cross, paid the penalty of death for the sin of mankind which was demanded by the justice of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, because he did not have a human father, was born with sinless humanity. He was back in the condition that Adam was originally, and he kept perfectly the absolute requirements of the Mosaic Law all of His life here on this earth.

So He was sinless, having fulfilled all the requirements of the Mosaic Law in terms of righteousness. So He was qualified to bear the sins of the world in death in their behalf. So He died on that cross, not for Himself, but vicariously in our place, for all of us. The death of the sinless Jesus Christ on the cross, bearing the moral guilt of the sin of mankind, satisfied the justice of God the Father. The required death penalty was paid. Those who choose to accept that provision go to heaven. Those who do not choose to accept the provision that their sin has been paid for go to the lake of fire.

Yes, every person in the lake of fire has all of his sins paid for. He's there with no problem with God and sin. He's there because he would not accept the gift of eternal life. This is just as we go to heaven as Christians, and we are impoverished there at the Judgment Seat of Christ because we would not accept the gift of grace. We frustrate the grace of God that says, "I want you to do this in life. I've given you the means to do it. Now, perform for Me with your talents; your treasures; and, your life, and I will return it to you a hundredfold. And you will come into eternity that is enriched beyond your fondest dreams." That's the offer to us as Christians. How many of us take it? How many of us sit around figuring out how we can avoid taking it, and still not feel guilty about it?

That's what the unsaved does with the gospel. In Romans 3:21, what God has done for us in justification is defined: "Now apart from the law (the Mosaic Law), the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets." The Mosaic Law was a testimony to exactly what you had to be to go to heaven – the absolute righteousness of God.

Verse 22: "Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, for all those who believe, there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Now Paul says, "The Mosaic Law couldn't save us. Along comes Jesus Christ. He paid the price." And He did it because He was sinless as a man, and He kept all the rules of the law. He never missed one. Therefore, He could die carrying the sins of all of us who were guilty, who couldn't keep the law, and who were guilty because of Adam's sin. All have sinned, so we all fall short of the glory of God, which is His absolute righteousness.

"Being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." This is justification. I surely hope you can define that by now. Justification means you have absolute righteousness credited to your account. That's why you're justified in the sight of God. You're as good as Jesus Christ. And it's a gift – the gift by the kindness of the grace of God. That's what people won't take. And some of you, who have gotten serious about being witnesses, have found out how ugly people can be; how resistant people can be; and, how mean-spirited they can be because you suggest that in Jesus Christ there's an opportunity to find salvation – just because God gives it to as a gift, not because of man.

Well, Jesse (the Body) Ventura, governor of Minnesota was on TV trying to answer why he said that religion is a crutch for weak-minded people who are trying to find other people like themselves to find comfort. Well, he declared that he was a Christian. Tim Russert asked him, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior?"

Jesse Ventura didn't answer. He didn't say, "You betcha." But this big wrestler said, "I've been used to making it on my own... I don't need this crutch." Who is the crutch? The crutch is the Son of God who is given to you as a potential gift. All the work is done. Everything is finished. It is God saying, "Here is this magnificent house; a turnkey job; and, it's yours. All you have to do is walk up; take the key from Me; and, go in. The key is the Lord Jesus Christ. That unlocks the door to heaven.

But these people of the world that have a great name and a great influence are part of the devil's world. What they are looking to is the forcefulness and the power of the sin nature. Why in the world do you Christians want to be buddies with that crowd, and follow their lead in your life, instead of identifying what these people are and where they are headed? They are going to go up in that final nuclear holocaust of the tribulation era when they're going to be vaporized by the living God. There go your ideals. There go your role models. There go your patterns. You do the same thing with your money that they do with theirs, on that self-focused greed. It's tough to understand, isn't it?

**Faith**

Verse 25: "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation (as satisfaction) in His blood, through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed." God had been giving people salvation on credit for centuries since the time of Adam. They said, "I believe." God said, "Stand by. I can't qualify you for justification quite yet, because My Son has not come to pay the price. But you're in. As soon as He comes, you're in." God was never taking anybody into heaven on the basis of any effort that they had through the Mosaic Law or anything else.

"For by the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus;" that is, who has nothing more than faith in Jesus. Is that the religious world today? No. Jesse Ventura couldn't say, "I have faith in Jesus. That's where it's at."

**Works**

"Where then is boasting? It is excluded by what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith." The Law of Moses depended on human effort. Nobody gets to heaven in that way. But the law of faith in Jesus Christ – everybody gets in who accepts that.

"For we maintain that a man is justified by faith, apart from the works of the law." We have those kooky people in the circle of our relatives who are worried about what kind of food they eat, lest they break a Mosaic Law. They are worried about what they do on Sunday. They're not worried about what they do on Saturday, the seventh day, because they're not consistent. That wouldn't be convenient. They live by all of these legalistic things so that they can please God. They never know from one moment to the next whether they're headed for heaven or not. They are pathetic victims of Satan.

1 John 2 makes it clear: "And He (Jesus Christ Himself) is the propitiation (the satisfaction) to the justice of God for our sins. And not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." Do you see why I'm telling you that people who are in hell also have their sins all covered? God was satisfied relative to the moral guilt of every human being – the whole world. Jesus Christ has not only satisfied God for our sins such that we're qualified for heaven, but for those who won't accept the gift – those of the whole world.

Now, once that happened, God (who was giving salvation on credit) could give it in reality. Now God was free to give salvation as a grace gift to anyone who would receive it by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. Acts 16:31: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." That simple little statement in John 6:47 puts it all together in a very succinct way: "Truly, truly, I say to you. He who believes has eternal life". There are no works; no additions; and, no human doing of any kind.

So those who do no more than to believe the gospel are born again spiritually. They have the absolute righteousness of God permanently credited to them so that they are saved from hell. They are destined for heaven. Where do I get that idea? 2 Corinthians 5:21: "He (God the Father) made Him (God the Son) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." That's why I say you have absolute righteousness. God swaps your moral guilt for the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ at the point that you accept His gift of salvation by grace. If you try to do that any other way (which whole denominations do – both Catholic and Protestant), then you're not going to heaven. It distresses some people to hear this because they think about their parents and other family members, and if this is true, then they're in big trouble.

However, what else can Romans 4:4-5 possibly mean? "Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due." If you work for somebody, and they give you the paycheck at the end of the week, how do you feel if they say, "I have a favor to give you before you go home? Here's your paycheck." Well, you think, "Favor? I worked for that. I earned it." Verse 5 says, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness. If you work for salvation, then you have earned it, and it's due to you. But you won't get salvation, because you can't get it that way. Nothing you can do qualifies, because everything you do is tainted by the sin of the old sin nature. But the one who does not try to get into heaven by works, but simply believes in Jesus Christ, that ungodly person is justified, and to him is reckoned the righteousness of God.

Romans 4:16: "For this reason, it is by faith that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all." We Christians also have father Abraham as our spiritual father. We are descended from him. This verse says that God made it by grace to make it sure. If it was by works, you never would know whether you are qualified or not. You would never know whether you were good enough. You would never know whether you had done enough.

What is the attitude of people in these church denominations that attach water baptism and works qualifying for salvation? If you ask them if they're going to heaven, they say, "Well, I sure hope so. I hope the good Lord is going to take me in." There is no certainty. Why not? Because to them, it is on the basis of what they have done, not on the basis of what God has done. For this reason, to make it a sure thing, which the law never could make it, salvation is by faith so that it might be in accordance with grace. That is a gift. This is so that the promise may be certain – a certainty, to all descendants. It is not only to those who are of the Law (the Jewish people), but also to those of us who are, because of our faith, also children of Abraham in the body of Christ. That is God's way.

And just in case somebody would think there is any other way to do it, the apostle Paul says in Romans 11:6, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works. Otherwise, grace is no longer grace."

So don't let anybody tell you like some of your relatives like to do: "Oh, yeah, we do all these things of the Mosaic Law. We do all these good things. We do all these works. We keep all of this. Then we also trust in Christ as Savior; we do the Lord's Supper; and, we do the water baptism. And we do all those other things, so we're sure we're covered." No, they're not. I've had mothers taking their infants to be baptized. Why do they do this? It's only by faith. They will say, "Well, yes, but this makes it sure that we cover it." So the kid grows up, and he says, "Hey, I've been baptized. I'm in." If you are in some of these denominations, at your funeral, they'll put out a bulletin, and in it they will tell the day on which you were baptized. Then they will add the phrase, "And when you became a Christian." And here a little child sprinkled with water becomes a Christian.

Paul says, "If you put in one flyspeck of work to qualify you for heaven, then God cannot give you the gift. It's works. You've tried to earn it. You cannot get it any other way except as a gift. When you get it as a gift, then it's a sure thing. If I buy a new car on payments, then it's not a sure thing. If I don't make the payments, my car is lost. But if somebody comes and gives me a car; I've got the title; and, it's all paid for, all I have to do is accept it. Then that is a sure thing. I prefer getting cars as a gift, making the sure thing, rather than by payments, which is why my cars are all so old. I don't have too many gift-giving friends. But why should I?

So salvation by faith is based only upon what God has done to satisfy His own justice. God said, "I've got to do it for Myself. They can't satisfy My justice. They can't propitiate Me. But I can. I'll do it through my Son, so then salvation will be a sure thing. If it comes as a gift with no strings attached, it is irreversible." So Romans 4:25 says, "He (Jesus Christ) was delivered up because of our transgressions." He was put on that cross because of our transgressions. He was put in the grave. He was raised from the dead because of our justification – because justification was a reality. Romans 5:8-11 says, "But God demonstrates his own love toward us, that while we were sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Did you get that?

God demonstrates his love toward us in that He loved us while we were yet sinners. That's when Christ died for us. Now, if He did that, that's the greatest thing He could do. That's the ultimate. God cannot do more for us than the fact that Christ died for us and removed our moral guilt. Now, having done that, much more, having been justified now, we stand with absolute righteousness by His blood, and we're going to be saved from wrath. We're never going to be lost again. We're never going to face the judgment of God relative to eternal life.

We can bring on discipline like the prodigal son. That will happen. He might even take us to heaven prematurely, but we are going to be saved from wrath. We can restrict Him from blessing us. It's very hard for Christians not to restrict God from blessing. So if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. Now that He is alive, he's going to take care of you. You're going to have everything you need in life. The more you give Him, the more you'll need.

Some Christians can never rise to that. And we say, "Fine." There are only three places in the inner circle. That is Peter, James, and John. There are not many believers who are going to be in that closeness to the Lord. They can't qualify. They can't rise to it. The rest of them are out there in the outer orbits. They are good Christians, but not right up there where it really counts.

Verse 11 says, "Not only this, but we also exalt in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." We have been adjusted to the standard of righteousness.

So the magnificent grace of God is a way of life for the Christian living today in the age of the church. The grace way of life provides a believer with a complete revelation of doctrine and Scriptures, and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which enables the believer to obey the mind of God as it is explained in doctrine. You will not (just because you are a Christian) obey the mind of God. You'll fight it all the way. It's only when you say, "Yes, Lord, I don't care if I go down starving. I'm going to do what my heart is burdened by You to do. I don't have to be told to do something when I see that the need is there."

So the Christian has the power to resist the appeals from his sin nature; from the world system; and, from Satan in this present evil age. We can say, "No" to evil. The grace power of the Christian then enables him to live a godly life; to walk in temporal fellowship with God the father; to be filled with the Spirit; and, to perform divine good works for his eternal rewards in heaven at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10 says that we shall all be judged for what we have done. I don't know what that verse makes you feel like, but it sends a cold chill up my back. If it doesn't yours, you have something wrong with your backbone. 2 Corinthians 5:10: "For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." He's not going to take your salvation from you, but boy, He will take the rewards of eternity from you. Your treasures will be gone.

With this background, we have been reminding ourselves of this business of frustrating the grace of God – the great occupational hazard of the Christian life. Hebrews 12:15 says, "See to it that no one (no Christian person) come short of the grace of God. This is after you're saved. The grace of God has brought you to salvation. Now you switch gears, and you start living by your human reason, governed by the sin nature. The writer of this book says, "Don't do that. Don't be saved by grace, and then try to live by the rules and the wisdom of man." This warns church age believers not to fall short of the grace way of life – not to go back to the legalisms of the Mosaic Law to try to please God. That can never be.

In Romans 8:6-8, the apostle Paul points out, "For the mind set on the flesh (that is, the sin nature) is death. The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God, for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so. Those who are in the flesh (who are under control of the sin nature), cannot please God."

So if you want to walk around and be like all your friends; like all people in the world; and, like all of your religious relatives, go ahead and have a field day because you're not going to have it out there when you come into His presence. If you walk by the governing of that sin nature, you cannot please God. You have fallen from grace.

**Grace**

We pointed out several things about grace. First of all, grace is all that God the Father is free to do for man on the basis of the cross death of Jesus Christ. Secondly, grace blessings depend only on who and what God is – not on man. Thirdly, grace is God doing the work of divine good, and man receiving the credit for it in a non-meritorious manner. Four: Grace provides a believer with sanctification, setting apart, making him like Jesus Christ. Five: Every Christian tastes the grace of God at the point of his salvation. Six: God constantly waits to pour out His rich blessings of grace on the believer. Seven: Disorientation to the Christian grace way of life is the greatest hazard of the Christian life. Eight: Grace alone is the basis of salvation. Nine: Grace is the basis for living the Christian life after salvation. It is the work of God all the way.

**The Implications of the Doctrine of Grace**

Here are the implications of the doctrine of grace. Grace tells us that God is perfect, and therefore any plans that He makes are perfect, relative to getting us into heaven; and, relative to living the Christian life. A perfect plan can only come from a perfect god. You cannot get a perfect plan from man. Man is not perfect. Therefore, if man is involved in any part of the plans of God, the plan is going to break down. If man is involved in any part of the plan of salvation, it's not going to work. If man is involved in the part of living the Christian life (the power to live the Christian life), his human effort is not going to work. It's going to break down. Therefore, grace excludes all human good.

**Pride**

However, it is impossible for a believer to get outside of the grace of God. You should understand that. If you choose not to live by grace, He will not bless you, and He will discipline you. You cannot get outside of the grace of God, once you are a Christian. Grace is the opposite of mental attitude sins. This is the example of pride rejecting grace. There are several little prides that we Christians have, which is an expression of rejecting the grace of God. There is a pride of the Christian who rejects eternal security. This person has the gall to think that he could perform a sin which is greater than any plan that God could provide to cover his sins. That takes a lot of gall to say, "I don't believe that you're secure forever." Anybody who says, "I don't believe that salvation is eternally secure," you can almost count on it, that that person is going to hell.

John 10:27-29 make this explicitly clear. Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and, I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish. No one shall snatch them out of My hand. My father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." I once pointed this verse out to a man who was arguing that you never could be sure whether you're going to heaven or not. I said, "You see, it's very clear that no one can snatch you out of the hand of God." And I said, "The reason for that is that here is the hand of Jesus Christ. When you are saved, you place yourself into the hand of Christ, and then God the Father places His hand over Christ and you. You have a double security." This person said, "Yes, no one else can snatch you out of the Father's hand, but you can snatch yourself out." Verse 21 says that no one is able to snatch them.

However, you may be bound and determined in your pride (and that's all it is) to feel that you're able to sin better than what God can handle, and greater than what God can handle. That's what you think. Some Christians I know I can see why they would think that. They're really good at sinning, and they have the inclination that they can beat God at the game. But it's not true.

2 John 10-11: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching (the teaching of salvation by the grace of God through the person of the God man, Jesus Christ), do not receive him into your house and do not give him a greeting." If anyone comes to you and does not believe in salvation by the free grace of God and the certainty of that salvation, don't invite him to your house for a meal, and don't meet him on the street with a "Hail fellow well met." For the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

From time to time, people get involved with Christian groups, and I've had to point out very often to them, "Do you realize that that group does not believe that your salvation is secure? Do you understand that that's a doctrine of Satan? Do you understand that your presence is confirming this false doctrine of Satan? Are you ready to be there sitting in their church services, and participating with them as if they were speaking for God? Do you not realize that that is exactly what this verse in 2 John says you must not do?" You don't socialize with them. All you do is testify to them: "I am." What Christian is going to be able to rise to that who is not humble, and capable of realizing that God is everything when it comes to salvation?

There's another kind of pride, and that is the pride of the believer who succumbs to the pressures of adversity. Something happens in your life, and you say, "Oh, why has this happened to me? Why me?" Usually when I hear somebody say that, I can think of a lot of reasons. If I know anything about them, I can think of a lot of reasons why they're good candidates for the discipline of God.

1 Corinthians 10:13: "No temptation has overtaken you, such as is common to man. And God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with your temptation, He will provide a way of escape also that you may be able to endure it." Don't whine because you did some foolish and stupid thing and say, "Why me?" There is no pressure that God brings upon you. There is no temptation that the world; the old sin nature; or, the devil can bring upon you that you are not capable of saying, "No" to as a Christian, if you're walking in fellowship, and you are in the mind of God through doctrine. You have the capacity the Jew never did. But you do. You don't have to be a ninny, and you don't have to be a victim.

But I'll tell you one thing. Those of you that have the pride to think that you're pressured more than the rest of us, so you go off on a tangent, and you go out into the left field in your Christian life, you're going to look like a bummer. You're not only going to act like a bummer, but the next time people see you, they're going to say, "Boy, what is happening to this person? This guy looks like a bummer now." That's right. The internal degeneration is going to show on the outside.

There's also a third pride of the Christian who thinks that he can he can undermine the grace system of working – the pride of the believer who has pseudo spirituality. He thinks that his morality; his works; his taboos; and, his human good are of more value than the plan of God. So he goes to legalism. This is the pride of the believer who thinks he is superior spiritually because of his legalisms and because of what he does. He thinks that it is on something that qualifies him.

There's a fourth pride. That is the pride of the believer who thinks with his emotions. If you want to raise the hackles of people, you just talk to them about thinking with their emotions. Point out to them that they're thinking with their emotions. I told you about the man who called one of our brothers who testified to him. He was all upset because our brother explained to him Romans 10:8-9: "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made into salvation." He said, "Your man has been implying that you don't have any emotions. He's saying that the heart is the mind, and that the heart is thinking."

I said, "That's right. You can't think with your heart. You don't think with your heart. When we speak of the heart, it's emotion. But the Bible says you believe. You can't believe with your emotions. You believe with your mind." But when you have a character who has the pride of his emotions, he will not give it up, because he thinks that his ecstatic feelings were more real than Bible doctrine truth. What they do in a crisis (a tragedy) is to emote. What they want in a church service is to be emoting, not realizing that all that emotion is being poured out of their old sin nature. It is not honoring to God. Some of us attended the concert at the Meyerson Concert Hall, which was put on by the Baptist charismatic types. It showed the travesty of the emotion that was supposed to be honoring to the Lord Jesus Christ. These people were thinking their emotions were greater than ever.

Years ago, before my administration at Berean Church, we were still in that little old building back there on the unfinished first floor. This pastor used to strum the guitar while he sang (no offense to our guitar players), but that would be because he knew how to act like a Tennessee Ernie Ford guy to get people emotionally going. It was just a nothing service. He used to have a bench down front with an army blanket over it. (He didn't have enough sense to put a Marine Corps blanket on it, if he wanted people to come to something where there was some power.) So he had this army blanket. He was getting people coming down to kneel at the altar up there. One time I wanted to put two candles on the end of that bench to at least make it look like an altar. This lady came up and said, "Wasn't this a wonderful service?"

I said, "Well, coming down to kneel at that bench doesn't make anything different with the Lord."

She said, "Oh, I know. But didn't you feel the Spirit here?" Well, I thought I smelled something on the breath of a couple of people that morning in the way of spirits. But this was pure gut emotion. This poor lady had nothing. Her life was nothing. She eventuated in nothing. This is the arrogance (the pride of the believer) who thinks with his emotions, and thinks that he has something special with God.

So, folks, the greatest danger of the Christian life is to fall short of the grace of God, and of letting that grace function in life. You'll turn into a Christian dog every time. You'll turn into a shriveled, greedy, cheap, Christian dog every time. You'll stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and you'll wonder why you ever did it. You are frustrating the grace of God. You can't get out of that grace. That is your lifestyle now. But you're going to keep squelching it, instead of letting it flow through your life. And one of the first things you'll do when you squelch the grace of God is that you'll think that you don't have to confess any sins. You'll think there are no flies on you. You're going to forget about the doctrine of maintaining your fellowship through confession – the regular use of 1 John 1:9.

That's why Hebrews 12:15 is cautioning us: "See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God." That means to be substandard, to be a habitual failure in the grace of God. This is present tense. Present tense in the Greek means that that happens all the time. Some Christians never stop falling short of the grace of God in their lives because they won't let go and let God do it. Let go, and let God. This is active voice. Don't fall short. You do it to yourself. It's a participle, which means it's a life principle. That is frustrating the riches of God's grace working in your life.

What does that lead into? Here we go. Probably the most sobering part of verse 15 is the root of bitterness. People hear about the grace of God, and they hear the admonitions of caution. But they don't want it. They want to say, "No." The first thing that crops up is bitterness in their soul: bitterness toward the preacher; bitterness toward that congregation; and, bitterness toward God. Where does that go? Where does that route lead when it takes hold? Make sure that you're here for the next session. This one is where it all comes together. Then you will understand why this fellow here; this woman here; this guy we knew here; and this lady we knew here – where they are now. The root of bitterness kills more grace Christians who can never rise to their grace orientation.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971

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