

# 1 Corinthians 15:10 Commentary

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1 CORINTHIANS - PROBLEMS OF A LOCAL CHURCH  
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**1 Corinthians 15:10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His 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. ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** chariti de theou eimi (1SPAI) o eimi, (1SPAI) kai e charis autou e eis eme ou kene egenethe, (3SAPI) alla perissoteron auton panton ekopiasa, (1SAAI) ouk ego de alla e charis tou theou [e] sun emoi.

**Amplified:** But by the grace (the unmerited favor and blessing) of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not [found to be] for nothing (fruitless and without effect). In fact, I worked harder than all of them [the apostles], though it was not really I, but the grace (the unmerited favor and blessing) of God which was with me. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** It is by the grace of God that I am what I am, and his grace to me has not proved ineffective, but I have toiled more exceedingly than all of them; but it was not I who achieved anything but God's grace working with me.

**ESV:** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ([ESV](#))

**International Children's Bible:** But God's grace has made me what I am. And his grace to me was not wasted. I worked harder than all the other apostles. (But I was not really the one working. It was God's grace that was with me.)

**KJV:** But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

**Moffatt:** But by God's grace I am what I am. The grace he showed me did not go for nothing; no, I have done far more work than all of them—though it was not I but God's grace at my side.

**NET:** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been in vain. In fact, I worked harder than all of them— yet not I, but the grace of God with me. ([NET Bible](#))

**NIV:** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them-- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ([NIV - IBS](#))

**NLT:** But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me-- and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Phillips:** But what I am now I am by the grace of God. The grace he gave me has not proved a barren gift. I have worked harder than any of the others - and yet it was not I but this same grace of God within me.

**TLB:** But whatever I am now it is all because God poured out such kindness and grace upon me—and not without results: for I have worked harder than all the other apostles, yet actually I wasn't doing it, but God working in me, to bless me.

**Way:** ... His grace, which stooped to me, has not proved ineffectual...

**Weymouth:** But what I am I am by the grace of God, and His grace bestowed upon me did not prove

ineffectual. But I labored more strenuously than all the rest—yet it was not I, but God's grace working with me.

**Wuest:** But by the grace of God I am what I am. And His grace to me did not turn out in vain, but I labored to the point of exhaustion more abundantly than all of them; however, not I myself, but the grace of God which labored with me. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Young's Literal:** and by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace that is towards me came not in vain, but more abundantly than they all did I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God that is with me;

**BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM AND HIS GRACE TOWARD ME DID NOT PROVE VAIN: chariti de theou eimi (1SPA) o eimi, (1SPA) kai e charis autou e eis eme ou kene egenethe, (3SAP):**

- **by the grace of God:** 1Co 4:7 Ro 11:1,5,6 Ep 2:7,8 3:7,8 1Ti 1:15,16
- **His grace:** 1Co 15:2 2Co 6:1)

## GRACE IN "TRIPPLICATE"

**But (de)** is a term of contrast which speaks of a "change of direction," which could not be more apropos than the change of direction is Saul the persecutor who was supernaturally transformed into Paul the proclaimer of the Gospel!

**By the grace of God... His grace... the grace of God** - The **key word** in this passage is clearly **grace** which gives us an "amazing" key regarding how we can experience a supernatural life of grace saturated, God glorifying service like Paul (1Co 4:16, 11:1).

As a physician I would occasionally write out prescriptions in "**triplicate**" - 1Corinthians 15:10 is God's "prescription in triplicate" to assure "spiritual health" in your life and ministry (cp Jn 10:10b)! **Take one dose of the truth of this passage "qd"** ("once per day").

**Refills:** Eternal. **Cost:** Free (but not cheap!). **Instructions:** Swallow it completely. Give your body time to "assimilate" it, so that it has maximum effect. It will be good (the best) medicine for your soul! It's God's amazing grace!

Beloved, if you have not memorized this verse, I would strongly encourage you to "treasure" (Ps 119:9<sup>[note](#)</sup>, Ps 119:11<sup>[note](#)</sup>) this great passage in your heart (**Memorizing His Word, Memory Verses by Topic**) so that your Teacher, the Holy Spirit, might be able to bring it to mind in times of need (Jn 14:26, cp He 4:16-note) (**Primer on Biblical Meditation**).

**But-** Even though Paul considers himself **the least of the apostles** (1Co 15:9-note), he now presents the contrasting thought. The idea is that "*Yes, I persecuted the church of God **BUT** by the grace of God I am what I am*" In other words, "**but**" introduces the radical change from what Paul was in **Self** and **devoid of grace** to what he became in the **Savior** by **divine grace**! As an aside, when you are reading the Scriptures, be sure not to pass too quickly over the "**contrast words (see discussion)**" like *but*, *yet*, *nevertheless*, etc, for these words often help to vividly bring out a particular truth in the passage, often signifying a "change of direction." It is always worthwhile to pause and ask *what* is being contrasted (or *why?* or *when?* etc).

I like the way the venerable commentator **Charles Hodge** introduces his discussion of this verse...

Christian humility does not consist in denying what there is of good in us, but in an abiding sense of ill-desert (**Ed:** that which deserves punishment - ie, we deserve hell, but God freely gives us heaven! Oh the depth of the riches of His grace Ep 1:7-note) and in the consciousness that whatever good we have is due to the **grace of God**. The **grace of God** in this context is not the love of God, but **the influence of the Holy Spirit** considered as an unmerited favor. This is not only the theological and popular sense, but also the scriptural sense of the word "grace" in many passages. That is, "*divine grace has made me what I am. Had I been left to myself, I should have continued a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. It is owing to his grace that I am now an apostle, preaching the faith that I once destroyed.*" ([1 Corinthians 15 Commentary](#)) (**Ed:** I would only add that the grace is not just unmerited favor, but is the power the Spirit provides for supernatural transformation, in Paul's case from a Christ persecutor to a Christ follower!)

**Henry Alford** writes that "With the humiliating conviction of his own unworthiness is united the consciousness of that higher Power which worked on and in him,—and this introduces his chastened self-consciousness of the extent and success of his apostolic labours." (De Wette). The position of "**but by the grace of God**" (see note below), and the repetition of "**His grace**" afterwards, show the emphatic prominence which he assigns to the divine Grace. ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))

## BY THE GRACE OF GOD

**By the grace** - ("by grace- alone" - [J. Bengel](#)) It is notable and quite fitting that the first word in the Greek sentence (which indicates that the word is being emphasized) is **grace**!

**By the grace of God I am what I am** - (Contrast this humble affirmation and admission of divine dependence of one saved Pharisee with the self-sufficient deluded prayer of another Pharisee in Lk 18:11) This speaks first of **saving** grace (Ep 2:5-note, Ep 2:8, 9-note) which then becomes the believer's daily **sanctifying** grace (He 13:9-note "strengthened" is present tense = continually). In view of the fact that Paul had just been talking about his service as an apostle (1Co 15:9-note), one might also say this refers to "**serving**" grace. Yes, grace is unmerited favor ("**the least of the apostles... persecuted the church**") for Paul deserved hell as we all do and yet God granted him heaven in His Son. And thus grace is not just unmerited favor, but is the power to transform an **object sinner** into an **absolute saint**. Grace is power to save and then daily, moment by moment, to continue to "save" (sanctify) the saved saint (If this sentence confuses you see notes on the Three Tenses of Salvation). Sadly it seems that many saints live as more as "aint's" than as saints--they understand that they are saved by grace but then fall into the trap of "trying" to live the supernatural life ("Christ life") in their strength. In this passage Paul is giving us the simple but profound secret for "successful" Christian living - grace.

First **grace toward** Paul caused him to be **saved by God** and then **grace through** him caused him to become a **servant of God** (cp Ro 1:1-note). Brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to imitate Paul's "spiritual motif", his *modus operandi* (1Co 11:1, cp 1Pe 2:21-note) if we would seek to redeem the time for the glory of the Lord in these evil last days (Ep 5:16-note, 2Ti 3:1-note, Mt 5:14, 15, 16-note, Php 2:15-note).

**Grace** took a man zealous to **persecute Christ** and transformed him into a man zealous to **preach Christ**! (cp 1Co 1:23, 2:2, 2Cor 4:5, Gal 6:14-note) Amazing grace indeed! **Application** = Is there someone in your sphere of influence (family member, friend, co-worker, etc) who you think is beyond the reach of the grace of God? Then think again!

**Anthony Thistleton** notes that in this section...

We come to the heart of Paul's point. Undeserved, unmerited '**grace**' (charis) which springs from the free, sovereign love of God alone and becomes operative in human life not only determines Paul's life and apostolic vocation but also characterizes all Christian experience, not (only) the promise of resurrection and the reality of the activity of Christ as Lord." "The double eimi ("I am") is firmly assertive — '**I am what I am**' is the favour, utterly undeserved, that summoned Saul of Tarsus...(Gal 1:13, 14, 15)." The gist of Paul's point is twofold: (i) God has made him what he is as sheer gift; (ii) in addition to being operative **toward** or **on** him, this grace has also been operative **through** him in making him an apostolic agent for the benefit of others. (Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000)

**I am (eimi)** - Don't miss this small but significant point that underscores what we've just read. The verb '**am**' (**eimi**) is in the **present tense** which signifies Paul was **continually** what he was by virtue of the grace of God. He never lost sight of this foundational truth that undergirded and enabled all aspects of his (and our) Christian life and his (our) Christ honoring service. As an aside, remember that all (eternally worthwhile) **good works** are **God works**, because they are **grace works**. As Paul explained to the saints at Corinth...

According to the **grace of God** which was **given to me** (Note: **Not** "*which was earned by me because I worked so hard and I deserved it!*"), as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man **be careful** (**present imperative** = command calling for continual attention for we are prone to wander away from "God works" into our own "good works" we falsely think are meritorious) how he builds upon it. For no (absolute negation = no exceptions!) man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1Co 3:10, 11)

**C H Spurgeon** speaking of Paul's confession "**by the grace of God I am what I am**" reminds us that...

THIS confession, suitable in the lips of Paul, is equally appropriate in the mouth of each one of us who have known and proved the grace of God. We must consider Paul, according to his own account of himself, as being "**not fit to be called an apostle**" — though "**not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles,**" — because he had persecuted the Church of God (1Co 15:9).

In respect of personal merit, he knew that he did not deserve to be accounted of at all; yet, when the sole, ground of approbation (act of approving officially) was not the service he had rendered to his Sovereign, but the favor which his Sovereign had bestowed upon him, he could say, "**By the grace of God I am what I am.**"

Take the meanest lamb in Jesus' fold, the feeblest heir of grace, the most timid and fearing, the most hopeless and helpless of all disciples, the man most devoid of talent, the man who stands the very lowest on the list of the saints of God, surely he may and must say that **"by the grace of God"** he is what he is, so far as he is in Christ, a believer, with all the privileges that believers have a gracious right to claim. Let this be thy comfort, thou little one, that the same grace that made an apostle of Paul has made a Christian of thee. The selfsame power that has quickened the mightiest man in the army of the Lord of hosts has quickened you also;

**The grace that saves the greatest  
saves the least.**

If the largest and brightest gem in the crown of Christ reflects his grace, and glorifies his love, even so shalt thou though thou be as the smallest pearl that shall be set in his glorious diadem of honor...

The song, which begins among the little and the timid; gathers strength among the great and the brave. It is not altered in the slightest degree; the language is the same, the strain the same, the song the same, "By the grace of God," we all of us must say, "we are what we are." ([1Corinthians 15:10 Lesson on Divine Grace](#)) (Or you can download an **Mp3 version** with a British accent to listen while you drive or run or bike - **1Corinthians 15:10 Lessons on Divine Grace**)

**When did Paul become by grace what he was?** Luke describes Paul's life changing Christ encounter in Acts 9. The confrontation with the resurrected, ascended, glorified Son of God on the Damascus Road changed Saul (Meaning = "Asked for") to Paul (Meaning = "little") (Acts 9:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13:9), a new creature in Christ (2Co 5:17-note), who was given a new purpose in life (Acts 26:16, 17, 18). Paul was part of the Jewish **remnant** that was supernaturally transformed from a "works based" spiritual death to a "grace based" spiritual life (Ro 11:5, 6-note) Instead of persecuting Christians, now he sought to see them saved by the same **grace of God** that had saved him! He went from boasting in his accomplishments which on a human level were many (Php 3:4, 5, 6-note), to boasting (Ro 5:11 YLT-note, 1Co 1:31, 2Co 10:17) in the **God of all grace** (1Pe 5:10-note)! That's what the **grace of God** does to a man (or woman) -- it transforms him (her) from a hater of Christ (Jn 7:7, 15:18, 23, 24, 25) and persecutor of the **Gospel of grace** (Acts 20:24) to a lover and proclaimer of the **Gospel of Christ** (Ro 1:9-note, Ro 15:19-note, 1Co 9:12, 2Co 2:12, 9:13, 10:14, Php 1:27-note, 1Th 3:2-note, 2Th 1:8).

**Dear reader, these truths about the transforming power of grace beg the question, can you say like Paul "by the grace of God I am what I am?" Dear believer can you truly say that you are living each day "by the grace of God?"**

If not, consider surrendering your rights, your self efforts, your "good" (but God-less) works, etc, to the God of all grace that you might come to genuinely experience the grace of God as your sole source of strength to live a supernatural life, in such a way that others may see your "abundant" life **in Christ** (Jn 10:10) and **glorify** (give a proper opinion) of our otherwise invisible Father Who is in heaven (Mt 5:16-note). May we all grow daily not just in head knowledge but in a heart, experiential knowledge of the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 3:18-note), that the world might more and more see Jesus in us (2Co 3:18), the **hope** (absolute certainty) of (future) **glory** (Col 1:27-note). To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen!

**I Am What I Am** -- A few years before **John Newton** died, a friend was having breakfast with him. Their custom was to read from the Bible after the meal. Because Newton's eyes were growing dim, his friend would read, then Newton would comment briefly on the passage. That day the selection was from 1 Corinthians 15. When the words **"by the grace of God I am what I am"** were read, Newton was silent for several minutes. Then he said,

"I am not what I ought to be. How imperfect and deficient I am! I am not what I wish to be, although I abhor that which is evil and would cleave to what is good. I am not what I hope to be, but soon I shall put off mortality, and with it all sin. Though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor yet what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was: a slave to sin and Satan (Play [Chris Tomlin's rendition of Newton's Amazing Grace coupled with My Chains Are Gone](#)). I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge that by the grace of God I am what I am!" Here is Newton's great hymn to grace...

**Amazing Grace**

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;

How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His Word my hope secures;  
He will my Shield and Portion be,  
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,  
And mortal life shall cease,  
I shall possess, within the veil,  
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,  
The sun forbear to shine;  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine.

When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.

[Amazing Grace - Bagpipes](#)  
[Mahalia Jackson - Amazing Grace](#)

Here is a story of **John Knox** which parallels that of John Newton. During his last hours, **John Knox** woke from a slumber sighing, and told his friends that he had just been tempted to believe he had 'merited heaven and eternal blessedness, by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God who has enabled me to beat down and quench the fiery dart, by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these: "What hast thou that thou has not received? By the grace of God I am what I am. Not I but the grace of God in me."

**John Newton's tombstone** - In his old age, when he could no longer see to read, John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace" heard someone recite this verse, "By the grace of God — I am what I am." 1 Corinthians 15:10. He remained silent a short time, and then said:

I am not what I ought to be. Ah! how imperfect and deficient.

I am not what I might be, considering my privileges and opportunities.

I am not what I wish to be. God, who knows my heart — knows I wish to be like Him.

I am not what I hope to be. Before long, I will drop this clay tabernacle, to be like Him and see Him as He is!

Yet, I am not what I once was — a child of sin, and slave of the devil!

Though not all these — not what I ought to be, not what I might be, not what I wish or hope to be, and not what I once was — I think I can truly say with the apostle, "By the grace of God — I am what I am!"

At the age of 82, Newton said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner — and that Christ is a great Savior!"

**John Newton's tombstone reads:** "John Newton, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy!"

By the grace of God I am what I am! (Letters of John Newton) "By the grace of God I am what I am!"

As believers, we are often affected with a sense of God's distinguishing mercy to us. We are debtors, great debtors to the sovereign grace of God, which alone makes us to differ from the perishing world around us!

Yet it does not yet appear what we shall be. We cannot form a just conception of the misery from which we are redeemed, much less of the price paid for our redemption! How little do we know of the Redeemer's surpassing excellency, and of the unutterable agonies He endured, when His soul was made an offering for sin, and it pleased the Father to bruise Him--that by His stripes we might be healed! These things will strike us in quite another manner--when we view them from the light of eternity!

May the cheering contemplation of the glorious hope set before us--support and animate us to improve our short interval on earth, and fill us with a holy ambition of shining as lights in this evil world, to the praise and glory of His grace--who has called us out of darkness, into His glorious light!

Encompassed as we are with snares, temptations, and infirmities, it is possible (by His promised assistance) to live in some good measure above the world--above the influence of its cares, its smiles, or its frowns. Our citizenship is in heaven--we are not at home--but only reside here on earth for a season, to fulfill our appointed service. The Lord, whom we serve, has promised that He will guide us by His wisdom, strengthen us by His power, and comfort us with the light of His countenance, which is better than life. Every temporal blessing we receive from Him, is a token of His favor, and a pledge of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which He has reserved for us in heaven. Oh! to hear Him say at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter into the joy of your Lord!" will be rich amends for all that we can lose, suffer, or endure, for His sake!

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined--what God has prepared for those who love Him!" 1 Corinthians 2:9 ([Ref](#))

Such I may have been — but for free and sovereign grace! (James Smith, "The Book That Will Suit You!")

"By the grace of God — I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

Consider what you were — before saved by sovereign grace. Your heart was enmity against God, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked! You did not have one pure desire, one holy thought, or one feeling of love to God.

Further, what would you have been — but for the grace of God? Look at the vilest, the most debased, the most debauched of our race — and you may truly say, "Such I may have been — but for free and sovereign grace!"

**Albert Barnes** comments that **Paul** is saying in this passage that...

What I have is to be traced to Him, and not to any native tendency to goodness, or any native inclination to His service, or to any merit of my own. All my hopes of heaven; all my zeal; all my success; all my piety; all my apostolic endowments, are to be traced to Him. Nothing is more common in the writings of Paul, than a disposition to trace all that he had to the mere mercy and grace of God. And nothing is a more certain indication of true piety than such a disposition.

**C H Spurgeon** discusses **experiential manifestations of grace** similar to those mentioned by John Newton in the preceding quote (this is a long quote but worth reading)...

By this (**experiential manifestations of grace**) I mean that there are times, in our experience, when this truth starts up in letters of light, and we recognize it as an indisputable fact, not only taught to us as a Scriptural doctrine, but proved to us by our own personal experience. Let me just narrate a few instances.

**Brethren and sisters, have you ever had times when the fountains of the great deep of your depravity have been broken up?** Have you ever been taken into the chambers of imagery, and has the Spirit of God there said to you, "Son of man, I will show you greater abominations than these;" and has he taken you first into one room, and then into another, and made you stand aghast while he has shown you the idols of your heart, the deep depravity that still remains in you, the pride, and sloth, and various forms of sin which still lurk and find shelter there? Have you ever had the filthy rags unrolled before your eyes? Have you heard the chattering of the unclean birds in the cage of your heart? Have you ever been fully conscious of the stench arising from your Old Adam nature? Has your spirit sickened at the very thought of the depravity of manhood in general, and of yourself in particular? Have you ever had your secret sins set in the light of God's countenance? Have you ever been made to see the blackness of your own sin side by side with the brightness of divine favor? Have you ever been made to taste the exceeding bitterness of your sin even at the communion table— even while you realized the preciousness of the blood of Christ, and renewed your former

fellowship with him?

If so, then I know that my text has been true to you, as it has been also to me, and that you have said, as I have often been compelled to say, **“By the glaze of God I am what I am”** (If you’ve never read it you must read **Spurgeon’s Personal Testimony of Amazing Grace!**)

You have looked at your heart, and you have, seen its barren soil, and if there has been any wheat growing upon it, you have said, “This is the result of the grace of God.”

You have looked at the huge black rock of your Old Adam nature, and when you have seen rivers of living water flowing out of the very midst of it, you have been obliged to say, “This mighty miracle could only have been wrought by the grace of God.”

**Flimsy views of human depravity lead  
to very indistinct ideas of the grace of God.**

There is nothing but deep soul ploughing that ever makes a man sound in the doctrines of grace; and I will defy any man, who has had a deep experience of his own odious depravity, to believe any other doctrines but the doctrine of grace, which are commonly called Calvinism. No, more than that, the mind, unless it be most graciously taught by the Spirit of God, will be apt to go beyond the true Scriptural doctrine, and to push the term beyond its legitimate sphere.

**There have been other occasions on which you and I have been forced to cry, “By the grace of God I am what I am;” namely, after some strong and terrible temptation.**

**Have you never known what it is to feel some old lust, which you thought was dead, suddenly come upon you with a whirlwind power, and drive you before it, like a sere leaf of the forest, that could not resist its might?**

I have, sometimes, had this trying experience. When quietly meditating upon the things of God, some fierce and fearful impulse to sin has assailed me, as if a giant had seized me by the neck, and pushed me onward until, at last, I came to the very brink of some awful iniquity, and looked down upon it; and, just as it seemed as if I must plunge into it, my eyes have been opened, and I have seen the horror of great darkness, and I have exclaimed,

“O God! how is it that I have not committed that sin? How is it that thou hast come to save me just in the nick of time, and stretched out thy hand to rescue me just when ‘my feet were almost gone,’ when ‘my steps had well-nigh slipped’?” Not only had I thought of slipping, but “my steps had well-nigh slipped. Then, thy mercy, O God, held me up!”

I do not know whether you have had strong impulses of that kind; many of God’s people have, and especially those who, before conversion, plunged deeply into sin. You have sometimes had almost on your lips the oath which you have hated in your inmost heart; iniquity has come before you in a fascinating guise, and although you abhorred it, yet, for the moment, a strange hallucination of dazzling witchery seemed to lay hold of your spirit, and if you had yielded to it, you would have been like Samson when he fell into the hands of the Philistines. So it is that we are often compelled to say, as we look back upon marvellous providences and divine interpositions, “Truly, by the grace of God we are what we are, and by that grace alone have we been preserved from falling into sin.”

**I think, too, that this truth has often been brought home to us when we have witnessed the fall of others.** You have, perhaps, walked to and from the house of God with some notable professor of religion, and he has instructed you on many points. He seemed to be a man of deep experience and devout life. Your heart has been knit to him, and you have said, “Here is a brother indeed;” and you have, possibly, envied him his great attainments and his fluent speech. Then, suddenly, you heard that he had fallen into some terrible sin; you made enquiries, and you found that it was only too true. You were present, one night, at the church meeting, when the solemn sentence of excommunication was pronounced upon him; and while the minister uttered it, all the members wept, and prayed that the poor fallen one might be brought to repentance, and that his soul might not be the prey of Satan. At such a time as that, you have said, “By the grace of God I am what I am,” and you have said, with good **John Newton**, —

**“When any turn from Zion’s way,  
(Alas, what numbers do!)  
Methinks I hear my Savior say,**

**'Wilt thou forsake me too?'**

**"Ah, Lord! with such a heart as mine,  
Unless thou hold me fast,  
I feel I must, I shall decline,  
And prove like them at last."**

Such instances may act as beacons to warn us of pride, and to teach us again the lesson that by the grace of God we are what we are.

**Then, brethren, I think there are other seasons when we learn this lesson; that is, in times of great dullness in spiritual matters.** Heavenly trade is not always brisk, even in the best market, that is, in the breast of the believer. Spiritual mariners do not find that the wind always blows; and thus, though we should always have our sails up, (which, alas! is not always the case with us) even then the wind would not always blow, for it "blows where it will." Like the sea, we have our ebb as well as our flood-tide. Do you not know what it is to go to the throne of grace, when — as for words, you can find plenty of them; but as for heart, and soul, and vigor in prayer, — if your salvation depended upon your fervency, you must perish? Have you not gone to the mercy-seat, and groaned there, — and groaned most of all because you could not groan as you ought. You have taken your wants to the throne of grace, but you have had to bring them away again. You have gone up to the house of God; and though you could find no fault with the sermon, there was, somehow or other, nothing in it for you. You went home to read your Bible; and though you knew that it was a precious book, it did not seem precious to you. It might be like a honeycomb (Ps 19:10), but you could not get any of the honey out of it. You had lost all spiritual appetite, and you felt as if you were drawing near to the gates of death. You remember, too, how you then sought the society of the godly, yet you received no consolation from them. Heavenly things seemed to be but dreams, the substantial things of eternity did not affect your spirit as they should have done; and you could only cry, with the psalmist, "My soul cleaves to the dust: revive me according to thy word." (Ps 119:25) And at such times, and especially if your prayer has been graciously heard, you have been compelled to say, "It is my natural state? to be cold and dull; and if, at any time, I run swiftly in the heavenly race, — if my sails are filled, and my bark is wafted towards paradise, — surely this is by the grace of God."

Just one more remark upon this point.

**Times of great mercy often operate upon some of us so as to bring us very low, and to make us feel "By the grace of God we are what we are."**

Simon Peter had this experience. When his boat was full of fish, so that it began to sink, he fell on his knees before his Master, and said "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Their greatness of God's mercy to him convinced him of his own undeservedness; and it has been the same with some of us. The more the glory of God's grace has been revealed to our souls, the humbler have we been made to lie at his feet. When the Lord has piled up his mercies till they were like the great mountains, and his faithfulness has been like the bottomless depths, then have we been obliged to say, "These great things are indeed of God, they could not have come of man." At such times, we have felt that we could sit before the Lord, as David did, and say, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" God sometimes overwhelms his children with mercy quite as completely as he ever does with affliction.

**Pride may be overcome in two ways.**

It is sometimes overcome by trouble that crushes a man; but, at other times, the same result is produced by almighty grace, which, in Overwhelming waves of love, rushes in upon the man's spirit, till, submerged in love and mercy, he can only resign himself to its depths, and feel yet ever feel that he cannot feel enough — the wonders of God's grace, and his own littleness in comparison with God's amazing favor. God sometimes humbles his children by putting them in the dark, but he sometimes does it in another way, as David said, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Ps 8:3,4) How often have we also had to say, with David, "How precious so are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!"

So I hope it will be with each one of us, that the greatness of God's mercy to us, as a church, and as individuals, will lead us to **say**, "By the grace of God we are what we are." ([1Corinthians 15:10 Lesson on Divine Grace](#))... And I would add, to **sing** hymns of praise to His grace, like ...

**Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,  
Call for songs of loudest praise.**

**O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!**

Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing**

**Grace** (favor) ([5485](#)) (**charis [word study]**) is derived from **chairō** which means to rejoice and which gives us our English word charity. Even as beggars need "*charity*" so sinners need *grace*, for we are all spiritual paupers outside of Christ, but "*God gives where he finds empty hands*"-Augustine [cp Mt 5:3-note].

**Grace** in simple terms is God's unmerited favor and supernatural enablement and empowerment for salvation (justification) and for daily sanctification (progressive sanctification). Grace is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything. Grace is what every man needs, what none can earn and what God Alone can and does freely give (Ro 8:32-note "freely give" = **charizomai** from **charis** = a grace gift!).

**Grace** addresses man's sin, while **mercy** addresses man's misery. The **gift of grace** makes men fit for salvation, miraculously making separated strangers into God's **beloved** sons (1Th 1:4-note, 1Jn 3:1-note, 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:3-note).

**Charis** - 155x in 147v in **NAS** (**The best way to study a word like "charis" is to observe all the NT uses in context - this would make an edifying study - Consider working through a few passages a day as your devotional exercise and be sure to read the passage in context. Record your observations and then check them with more formal lexicons**) - Luke 1:30; 2:40, 52; 4:22; 6:32, 33, 34; 17:9; Jn 1:14, 16, 17; Acts 2:47; 4:33; 6:8; 7:10, 46; 11:23; 13:43; 14:3, 26; 15:11, 40; 18:27; 20:24, 32; 24:27; 25:3, 9; Ro 1:5, 7; 3:24; 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15, 17, 20, 21; 6:1, 14, 15, 17; 7:25; 11:5, 6; 12:3, 6; 15:15; 16:20; 1Co 1:3, 4; 3:10; 10:30; 15:10, 57; 16:3, 23; 2Co 1:2, 12, 15; 2:14; 4:15; 6:1; 8:1, 4, 6f, 9, 16, 19; 9:8, 14, 15; 12:9; 13:13; Gal 1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18; Ep 1:2, 6f; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7, 29; 6:24; Php 1:2, 7; 4:23; Col 1:2, 6; 3:16; 4:6, 18; 1Th 1:1; 5:28; 2Th 1:2, 12; 2:16; 3:18; 1Ti 1:2, 12, 14; 6:21; 2Ti 1:2, 3, 9; 2:1; 4:22; Titus 1:4; 2:11; 3:7, 15; Philemon 1:3, 25; Heb 2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15, 28; 13:9, 25; Jas 4:6; 1Pe 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19, 20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12; 2Pe 1:2; 3:18; 2Jn 1:3; Jude 1:4; Rev 1:4; 22:21.

**NAS** translates **charis** with the following English words = blessing(1), concession(1), credit(3), favor(11), gift(1), grace(122), gracious(2), gracious work(3), gratitude(1), thank(3), thankfulness(2), thanks(6).

The English word **grace** is from the Latin **gratia** meaning favor, charm or thanks. **Gratia** in turn is derived from **gratus** meaning free, ready, quick, willing, prompt. **Webster** defines **grace** as the...

unmerited love and favor of God which is the spring and source of all benefits men receive from Him, including especially His assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification. (Grace is) a virtue from God influencing man, renewing his heart and restraining him from sin. (Compare this more "modern Webster" with [Noah Webster's original definition of grace](#))

**Grace is God's generous favor  
to undeserving sinners  
and needy saints who are...**

Saved by Grace (Ep 2:8, 1:7)

Sure by Grace (Ro 5:2)

Secure by Grace (Ro 3:24)

Strengthened by Grace (2Co 12:9, 2Co 9:8)

Supplied by Grace (He 4:16)

Somebody by Grace (Ep 3:7,8)

Satisfied by Grace (Ep 2:7)

Surprised by Grace (1Co 15:8-10)

(Adapted from Alan Carr)

**Warren Wiersbe** has some excellent words on the **grace of God**...

The believer who lives in the sphere of God's grace is free, rich, and running in the lane that leads to reward and fulfillment. The believer who abandons grace for Law is a slave, a pauper, and a runner on a detour. In short, he is a loser. And the only way to become a winner is to "purge out the leaven," (1Co 5:7) **the false doctrine that mixes Law and grace**, and yield to the Spirit of God. God's grace is sufficient for every demand of life. We are saved by grace (Ep 2:8, 9, 10), and we serve by grace (1Co 15:9, 10). Grace enables us to endure suffering (2Co 12:9). It is grace that strengthens us (2Ti. 2:1), so that we can be victorious soldiers.

Our God is the **God of all grace** (1Pe 5:10). We can come to the **throne of grace** and find grace to help in every need (He 4:16). As we read the Bible, which is "**the Word of His grace**" (Ac 20:32), the **Spirit of grace** (He 10:29) reveals to us how rich we are in Christ. "And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace" (Jn 1:16). How rich we are! ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#))

The Christian goes "**from grace to grace**" (Jn 1:16). The Christian life begins with **saving grace** (Ep 2:8,9, Ep 2:10). It continues with **serving grace** (1Co 15:9, 1Co 15:10); then **sanctifying grace** (Ro 5:17; Ro 6:17). God also gives **sacrificing grace** (2Co 8:1-9), **singing grace** (Col 3:16), **speaking grace** (Col 4:6), **strengthening grace** (2Ti 2:1), and **suffering grace** (2Co 12:9). "He gives more grace" (Jas 4:6NKJV). ([Wiersbe, W. W. Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books or Wordsearch](#)) (**Bolding added**)

**Whatever begins with God's grace  
will always lead to glory**

--Warren Wiersbe

**J C Philpot...**

What but sovereign grace—rich, free and super-abounding grace—has made the difference between you and the world who cannot receive Him? But for His divine operations upon your soul, you would still be of the world, hardening your heart against everything good and godlike, walking on in the pride and ignorance of unbelief and self-righteousness, until you sank down into the chambers of death!

**Octavius Winslow** agrees declaring "Christian! the only thing that makes you differ from the vilest being that pollutes the earth, or from the darkest fiend that gnaws his chains in hell, is the free grace of God!"

**C H Spurgeon** agrees writing: "All that we have received has come to us by the way of free grace! If our sense of our own unworthiness is clear, if we know what worse than nothings we are, what a mass of sin and corruption we are by nature, we shall never think that we receive anything from God by the way of merit. Still our proud hearts need to be told over and over again that all the blessings we enjoy come to us by the free and sovereign grace of God! The bread on your table is flavored with grace. Your meat has mercy for its sauce. Every drop of water which cools your tongue tastes of mercy. Charity clothes you. Infinite love feeds you. And as for your spiritual blessings, where are your streams found, whence do they gush—but from the inexhaustible fountain of eternal love? God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ—and in the love which shone from that cross to such poor, unworthy ones as we are! Those are charming bells indeed—free grace and dying love! Through the ivory gate of grace, all mercies come to sinners." ([A Song Concerning Loving Kindnesses](#))

Ah! but for free and sovereign grace,  
I still had lived estranged from God,  
Till hell had proved the destined place  
Of my deserved but dread abode.

But O, amazed, I see the hand  
That stopped me in my wild career;  
A miracle of grace I stand;  
The Lord has taught my heart to fear.

To fear His name, to trust His grace,  
To learn His will be my employ;  
Till I shall see Him face to face,  
Himself my heaven, Himself my joy.

--L M H Pace

**Phil Newton** explains that **theologians speak of three types of grace**:

- (1) **Common grace**, that which is given to everyone, e.g., air to breathe, warmth of the sun, etc.;
- (2) **Saving grace**, that which is the sovereign work of God in regenerating and calling sinners to himself that they might believe the gospel and be saved;
- (3) **Sanctifying or sustaining or "walking" grace**, that which is given by God to assist the believer in his spiritual maturity...

We do not dispense grace nor manipulate it. It is not ours to demand of God but by its very nature, a gift of God. Multitudes of examples are found in the Old Testament of Israelites attempting to presume upon God's grace: e.g., manna given by grace but this grace presumed upon by those who failed to heed God's command to gather on Fridays enough for that day and the Sabbath.

**Why do we need grace?** We are limited by our own weakness, sinfulness, and imperfections. We struggle with the pride that asserts our own strength, our own ability, and our own wisdom to the neglect of trusting the Lord. This does not mean that we are to fail to utilize all that God has entrusted to us by way of mind, personality, resources, and abilities. But it does mean that there is a difference between leaning upon ourselves and learning to lean upon the resources of our Lord. ([Walking By Grace - James 4:6-10](#))

"Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth is His name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle."  
Martin Luther

## **TEACHING GRACE**

**Paul** gives a great explanation of the **"instructing** (teaching, disciplining) **effect"** of grace in Titus 2:11ff writing...

**Titus 2:11** For (explains Titus 2:10-note how bondslaves were able to adorn the doctrine of God) **the grace of God** has appeared (In the form of a Person, the Messiah - Jn 1:14, 16, 2Ti 2:1-note), bringing salvation to all men, (Titus 2:11-note)

**Titus 2:12 (the grace of God) instructing (paideuo** = the training or disciplining as one would in raising a child to maturity - The present tense = continually training us, so if we don't partake of this "instruction" and "empowerment" it is not for lack of supply - cp 2Co 12:9-note) us to **deny** (**Ed**: Beloved, do not try to "deny" things in your own strength or by trying to keep a set of "do's and don't's" which is simply a form of legalism - Read about the effect of "legalistic" rules on our old flesh nature in Ro 7:5-note]. We will always fail miserably. Grace and law are like oil and water - they do not mix. Never! Admit you cannot **deny** the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil in your own strength** and cast yourself upon the abundant, sufficient grace of God **to deny**) ungodliness (asebeia) and worldly desires and to **live** (to live a *graceful* life we must continually be *grace filled*) sensibly (sophronos), righteously (dikaios) and godly (eusebos) in the present age, (Titus 2:12-note)

**Titus 2:13 looking for** (prosdechomai = looking expectantly as our lifestyle [present tense] = continually. E.g., Arising each morning, asking "Could this be the day?" and then living like it! -- What we are looking for will or should radically impact what and Who we are living for! No longer our own possession) the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus (Titus 2:13-note)

**Titus 2:14** Who gave Himself for (huper = in our place = Our Substitute) us, that He might redeem (lutroo) us from every lawless deed and purify (katharizo = same verb James uses to command us to **cleans** our hands! Jas 4:7-note) for Himself a people for His own possession (periousios, cp 1Co 6:20, 7:23, 1Pe 2:9-note, Lv 20:26, Dt 26:18, 19, Ex 19:6), zealous (Christians should be radical) for **good deeds** . (Titus 2:11-note, Titus 2:12-note, Titus 2:13-note, Titus 2:14-note)

**Grace of God** - This specific phrase occurs 21x (twice in 1Co 15:10) in 20 v in the **NAS** - Lk 2:40; Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:26; 20:24; Ro 5:15-note; 1Co 1:4; 3:10; 15:10; 2Co 1:12; 6:1; 8:1; 9:14; Gal 2:21; Col 1:6-note; Titus 2:11-note; Heb 2:9-note; He 12:15-note; 1

Pet 4:10-note; 1Pe 5:12-note

The phrase **God of grace** expresses the Source of the Grace, God Himself **"the God of all grace"** (1Pe 5:1-note), Who reigns as sovereign on **"the throne of grace"** (He 4:16-note), and Who Alone **"gives grace and glory"** (Ps 84:11 [Spurgeon's note](#))

The **grace of God** is described as...

- **Glorious** (Ep 1:6-note)
- **Abundant** (Acts 4:33)
- **Rich** (Ep 1:7-note)
- **Manifold** (many-sided, multi-colored, variegated) (1Pe 4:10-note)
- **Sufficient** (sufficing, enough, adequate - there is never a shortage) (2Cor 12:9-note)

**Grace of God** - Notice that 1Co 15:10 begins with the **grace of God** and fittingly ends with the **grace of God**. Paul is but an instrument (Acts 9:15), a vessel (2Ti 2:21), a "fruit bearing branch" (Jn 15:5, 16) through which the grace of God works effectively and energetically. Paul was what he was by the grace of God and labored as he labored by the grace of God! From start to finish and all in between, our life is to be saturated with the grace of God if we would desire to bear any fruit that endures the fire of judgment at the Bema seat (1Cor 3:11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 2Co 5:10-note). Now we can understand why Paul's emphasis on humility in 1Co 15:9-note, "sets him up" for reception of God's amazing grace in 1Co 15:10, for James teaches that "God is opposed (antitasso in the present tense = continually) to the proud (huperephanos), but gives (present tense = continually) grace to the humble (tapeinos)." (Jas 4:6-note, cp 1Pe 5:5-note). Paul understood "the gravity of grace."

### "THE GRAVITY OF GRACE"

**Hughes** describes the **"gravity of grace"** writing that it...

works like the earth's water system, which always flows from the highest to the lowest. Just as the waters of Niagara roll over the fall and plunge down to make a river below, and just as that river flows ever down to the even lower ranges of its course, then glides to still more low-lying areas where it brings life and growth, so it is with God's grace. Grace's gravity carries it to the lowly in heart, where it brings life and blessing. Grace goes to the humble.

This is the spiritual law behind Proverbs 3:34, which James has quoted in Jas 4:6: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." The unbowed soul standing proudly before God receives no benefit from God's falling grace. It may descend upon him, but it does not penetrate, and drips away like rain from a statue. But the soul lying humbly before God is immersed—and even swims—in a sea of grace. So while there is always "more grace," it is reserved for the lowly—the humble. ([Hughes, R. K. James : Faith that works. Preaching the Word. Crossway Books](#))

The great Puritan writer **Thomas Watson** speaks of the spiritual dynamic which "activates" **grace** noting that...

**Grace** can never thrive where pride and self-conceit grow. As a body with cancer cannot thrive—so neither can the soul thrive, which is cancered with pride and self-conceit. A proud head—makes a barren heart!

Despite all that God used Paul to accomplish, the fact that grace continued to flow down indicates that he maintained an attitude of humility.

**Matthew Henry**...

It is God's prerogative to say, I am that I am; it is our privilege to be able to say, "By God's grace we are what we are." We are nothing but what God makes us, nothing in religion but what his grace makes us. All that is good in us is a stream from this fountain. Paul was sensible of this, and kept humble and thankful by this conviction; so should we. Nay, though he was conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all: he thought himself so much more the debtor to divine grace

As **Thomas Brooks** wrote...

**Humility** is both a **grace**, and a vessel to receive **grace**. There are none that see so much need of **grace** as humble souls; there are none that prize **grace** like humble souls; there are none that improve **grace** like humble souls; therefore God singles out the humble soul to fill him to the brim with **grace**, while the proud are sent empty away.

**Comment: This basic Biblical axiom begs the question - How's your (my) "humility quotient?"**

**John the Baptist** was a man who understood that grace was free to the soul that was humble declaring that...

A man can receive **nothing** (Greek = word meaning ABSOLUTELY nothing!), unless it have been given him from heaven. (Jn 3:27)

**Spurgeon...**

In what humble tones Paul speaks! He will not deny what grace has done in him and by him, but he will ascribe it **all to grace**. Brethren, you are not to shut your eyes to the gracious change which God's Holy Spirit has wrought in you. You may speak of it, and speak of it often, but **always guard against taking any of the honour to yourselves**, and be especially careful to put the crown upon the right head (cp Ps 115:1)

**Grace: — Greater than Our Sin**

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,  
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within,  
Grace, grace, God's grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

**—Julia H. Johnston**

The **grace of God** is the love of God in action, **calling** sinners like "*Paul the persecutor*" to new life in Christ, the very One he was persecuting...

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who **called** you **by the grace of Christ**, for a different gospel (Gal 1:6)

(Paul testifies to the calling power of grace) But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and **called** me **through His grace**, was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood (Gal 1:15, 16)

And it was for this He **called** you through our **gospel** (remembering the gospel is the "**gospel of the grace of God**" = Acts 20:24), that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2Th 2:14)

(God) Who has saved us, and **called** us with a holy calling, not according to our works (we could never earn this "call" from God), but according to His own purpose (cp Ep 1:9) and **grace** which was granted us in Christ Jesus (Where is the grace?) from all eternity (When did God call us by grace? We weren't even created when He called us! cp When He choose us [election] = Ep 1:4-note), (2Ti 1:9-note)

**And His grace toward me did not prove vain** - Lenski writes that "While '**and**' (kai) coordinates the next clause grammatically, it really explains what God's grace did with Paul." **Lenski** adds that "**toward me**" (eis eme) "is only a phrase that is attached to "grace" like an adjective: "his grace toward me." When it came in contact with Paul it proved itself grace indeed." ([Wordsearchbible - Lenski - Commentary on the New Testament](#)) ([Logos - Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament](#))

**Did not prove vain** - More literally this reads "did not become in vain". The Greek word for "**not**" (**ou**) signifies absolute negation. In other words the grace flowing through Paul was absolutely not without temporal and eternal effect. God's grace was not "wasted" or "worthless" or ineffective in Paul. What does this imply? It seems to me that it indicates Paul was a "great grace receiver." God's grace is always there for our appropriation, but too often is "wasted" with **pride** being one of the chief impediments to the free flow of grace into our lives. In context the effectiveness of God's grace was evidenced by the fact that Paul labored more than the other apostles. This sounds at first hearing to be on the "boastful side". But Paul quickly clarifies that it was not "all about Paul" but it was all about the grace of God that enabled Paul to be all he could be (and do all he could do) for Christ. Let him who boast, boast in the Lord Jesus Christ (1Co 1:31)!

As **Erwin Lutzer** said...

Only those who see themselves as utterly destitute can fully appreciate the grace of God.

**Matthew Henry** adds that...

Those who have the grace of God bestowed on them should take care that it be not in vain. They should cherish, and exercise, and exert, this heavenly principle. So did Paul, and therefore laboured with so much heart and so much success. And yet the more he laboured, and the more good he did, the more humble he was in his opinion of himself, and the more disposed to own and magnify the favour of God towards him, his free and unmerited favour. Note,

**A humble spirit will be very apt  
to own and magnify the grace of God.**

A humble spirit is commonly a gracious one. Where pride is subdued there it is reasonable to believe grace reigns.

## **PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF GRACE**

**Alexander Maclaren** is right when he says that...

that word '**grace**' has got to be worn threadbare, and to mean next door to nothing, in the ears and minds of and great many continual hearers of the Gospel. But Paul had a very definite idea of what he meant by it; and what he meant by it was a very large thing, which we may well ponder for a moment as being the only thing which will transform and ennoble character and will produce fruit that a man need not be ashamed of. The grace of God, in Paul's use of the words, which is the scriptural use of them generally, implies these two things which are connected as root and product—the active love of God, in exercise towards us low and sinful creatures, and the gifts with which that love comes full charged to men. These two things, which at bottom are one, love and its gifts, are all, in the Apostle's judgment, gathered up and stored, as in a great storehouse, in Jesus Christ Himself, and through Him are made accessible to us, and brought to bear upon us for the ennobling of our natures, and the investing of us with graces and beauties of character, all strange to us apart from these.

Now it seems to me that these two things, which come from one root, are the precise things which you and I need in order to make us nobler and purer and more Godlike men than otherwise we could ever become. For what is it that men need most for noble and pure living? These two things precisely—motive and power to carry out the dictates of conscience.

Every man in the world knows enough of duty and of right to be a far nobler man than any man in the world is. And it is not for want of clear convictions of duty, it is not for want of recognised models and patterns of life, that men go wrong; but it is because there are these two things lacking, motives for nobler service, and power to do and be what they know they ought to be. And precisely here Paul's gospel comes in, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' That grace, considered in its two sides of love and of giving, supplies all that we want.

## **GRACE BENDS THE WILL**

It supplies motives. There is nothing that will bend a man's will like the recognition of divine love which it is blessedness to come in contact with, and to obey. You may try to sway him by motives of advantage and self-interest, and to thunder into his ears the pealing words of duty and right and 'ought,' and there is no adequate response. You cannot soften a heart by the hammers of the law. You cannot force a man to do right by brandishing before him the whip that punishes doing wrong. You cannot sway the will by anything but the heart; and when you can touch the deepest spring it moves the whole mass.

You have seen some ponderous piece of machinery, which resists all attempts of a puny hand laid upon it to make it revolve. But down in one corner is a little hidden spring. Touch that and with majestic slowness and certainty the mighty mass turns. You know those rocking-stones down in the south of England; tons of weight poised upon a pin point, and so exquisitely balanced that a child's finger rightly applied may move the mass. So the whole man is made mobile only by the touch of love; and the grace that comes to us, and says, 'If ye love Me, keep My commandments'—is, as I believe, the sole motive which will continuously and adequately sway the rebellious, self-centered wills of men, to obedience resulting in nobility of life.

## **GRACE EMPOWERS THE WILL**

**The other aspect of this same great word is, in like manner, that which we need.** What men want is, first

of all, the **will** to be noble and good; and, second, the **power** to carry out the will. It is God that worketh in us both the willing and the doing. I venture to affirm that there is no power known, either to thinkers, or philanthropists, or doctrinaires, or strivers after excellence in the world—no power known and available which will lift a life to such heights of beauty and self-sacrificing nobility, as will the power that comes to us by communication of the grace that is in Jesus Christ.

I am perpetually trying to insist, dear brethren, upon this one thought, that the communication of actual new life is the central gift of the Gospel; and this new life it is, this nature endowed with new desires, hopes, aims, capacities, which alone will lift the whole man into unwonted heights of beauty and serenity. It is the grace of God, the gift of His Divine Spirit who will dwell with all of us, if we will, which alone can be trusted to make men good.

And now, if that be true, what follows? Surely this, that for all you who have, in any measure, caught a glimpse of what you ought to be, and have been more or less vainly trying to realize your ideal, and reach your goal, there is a better way than the way of self-centered and self-derived and self-dependent effort. There is the way of opening your hearts and spirits to the entrance and access of that great power, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which will do in us and for us all that we know we ought to do, and yet feel hampered and hindered in performing.

Oh, dear friends! there are many of you, I believe, who have more or less spasmodically and interruptedly, but with a continual recurrence to the effort, sought to plant your feet firmly in the paths of righteousness, and have more or less failed. Listen to this Gospel, and accept it, and put it to the proof. The love of God which is in Christ Jesus, and the life which that love brings in its hands, for all of us who will trust it, will dwell in you if you will, and mould you into His own likeness, and the law of the spirit of life which was in Christ Jesus will make us free from the law of sin and death.

## THE NOBLE LIFE

All noble living is a **battle**. Can you and I, with our ten thousand, meet him that cometh against us with his twenty, the temptations of the world and of its Prince? Send for the reinforcements, and Jesus Christ will come and train your hands for war and your fingers for the fight. All noble life is **self-denial**, coercion, restraint; and can my poor, feeble hands apply muscular force enough to the brake to keep the wheels clogged, and prevent them from whirling me downhill into ruin? Let Him come and put His great gentle hand on the top of yours, and that will enable you to scotch the wheels, and **make self-denial possible**.

All noble life is a building up by slow degrees from the foundation. And can you and I complete the task with our own limited resources, and our own feeble strengths? Will not 'all that pass by begin to mock' us and say, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'? That is the epitaph written over all moralities and over all lives which, catching some glimpse of the good and the true and the noble, have tried, apart from Christ, to reproduce them in themselves. Frightful gaps, and an unfinished, however fair structure end them all. Go to Him. 'His hand hath laid the foundation of the house, His hand shall also finish it.' He who is Himself the Foundation-stone is also the Headstone of the corner, which is brought forth with shouting of 'Grace! Grace unto it!' (**Read Maclaren's entire message - 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul's Estimate of Himself**)

## FREE GRACE

Self-righteous souls on works rely,  
And boast their moral dignity;  
But if I lip a song of praise,  
Each note shall echo, Grace, free grace!

'Twas grace that quickened me when dead;  
'Twas grace my soul to Jesus led;  
Grace brings a sense of pardoned sin,  
And grace subdues my lusts within.

Grace reconciles to every loss,  
And sweetens every painful cross;  
Defends my soul when danger's near;  
By grace alone I persevere.

When from this world my soul removes  
To mansions of delight and love,  
I'll cast my crown before his throne,  
And shout, Free grace, free grace alone!  
--L. M. (1790)

**Vain** (2756)(**kenos** [word study]) means literally to be without something material and thus means empty or without content. **Kenos** also can mean without result, without effect, to no purpose. In the present context then **Kenos** describes an endeavor or labor which results in nothing of eternal value, no spiritual fruit, no evidence of "success" (from a heavenly perspective), destitute of spiritual wealth, devoid of truth.

**Lenski** explains that **not vain** "is a **litotes** (an understatement in which an affirmative ["genuine"] is expressed by the negative ["not"] of the contrary ["vain"]) for the positive idea "**genuine**," being in the fullest sense exactly what the term "**grace**" expresses."

Paul used **kenos** again in this same chapter...

1Corinthians 15:14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is **vain**, your faith also is **vain**.

**Comment:** Clearly the only truth that makes the preaching of the Gospel and our faith in that Gospel of any value is the fact that Jesus Christ has been resurrected from the dead. Buddha's body is still in the grave. Mohammed's body is still in the grave. And the list goes on. Only the resurrection of Christ brings hope and light into a spiritually hopeless, dark world. Let your light shine beloved (Mt 5:16).

1Corinthians 15:58-note Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil (**kopos** - related to kopiao describing Paul's intense, demanding labor in 1Co 15:10) is not in **vain** (kenos) in the Lord.

**Comment:** Note the key phrase "in the Lord". Yes Paul worked long and hard, but it was in the Lord, initiated by His Spirit, empowered by His Spirit, bringing glory to the Father, and our goal should be to imitate Paul's pattern, so that our "good works" are truly "God works" and not "empty works". (For more discussion see commentary on 1Co 15:58)

**Kenos** - 18x in 16v in **NAS**- Mk 12:3; Lk 1:53; 20:10,11; Acts 4:25; 1Co 15:10, 14 (2x), 1Co 15:58; 2Co 6:1; Gal 2:2; Eph 5:6; Php 2:16; Col 2:8; 1Th 2:1; 3:5; Jas 2:20. **NAS** = empty(2), empty-handed(4), foolish(1), futile things(1), vain(10).

Luke 1:53 "HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; and sent away the rich empty-handed.

**Vine** makes a distinction between the two Greek words for "**vain**"...

There are two words for "vain"; kenos, used here, which signifies empty, lacking in anything which might or should be possessed (the same word in v. 14), and mataios, which signifies lack of result. In James 2:20 the vain man (kenos) is one empty of divinely imparted wisdom; in James 2:26 the vain religion (mataios) is that which produces nothing profitable; kenos stresses lack of quality, mataios lack of effect.

## A PURITAN PRAYER WAVE UPON WAVE OF GRACE

O God of grace,

Teach me to know  
that grace precedes,  
accompanies,  
and follows my salvation;  
that it sustains the redeemed soul,  
that not one link of its chain can ever break!

From Calvary's cross, wave upon wave of grace ...

reaches me,  
deals with my sin,  
washes me clean,  
renews my heart,  
strengthens my will,  
draws out my affection,

kindles a flame in my soul,  
rules throughout my inner man,  
consecrates my every thought, word, work,  
teaches me Your immeasurable love.

**How great are my privileges in Christ Jesus!**

Without Him I stand far off, a stranger, an outcast.  
In Him I draw near and touch His kingly scepter!

Without Him I dare not lift up my guilty eyes.  
In Him I gaze upon my Father-God and friend!

Without Him I hide my lips in trembling shame.  
In Him I open my mouth in petition and praise!

Without Him all is wrath and consuming fire.  
In Him is all love, and the repose of my soul!

Without Him is gaping hell below me, and eternal anguish.  
In Him its gates are barred to me by His precious blood!

Without Him darkness spreads its horrors before me.  
In Him an eternity of glory is my boundless horizon!

Without Him all within me is terror and dismay.  
In Him every accusation is charmed into joy and peace!

**Praise be to You for grace, and for  
the unspeakable gift of Jesus!**

"By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Cor. 15:10

**BUT I LABORED EVEN MORE THAN ALL OF THEM, YET NOT I BUT THE GRACE OF GOD WITH ME: alla perissoteron auton panton ekopiasa, (1SAAI) ouk ego de alla e charis tou theou [e] sun emoi:**

- **but:** Ro 15:17, 18, 19, 20 2Co 10:12-16 11:23-30 12:11
- **yet:** Mt 10:20 2Co 3:5 Ga 2:8 Ep 3:7 Php 2:13 4:13 Col 1:28,29)

**W E Vine** comments that...

as in Paul's case so in that of everyone who partakes of the salvation provided in the gospel, **grace reigns**, but each one needs to live in such a way so that the **grace bestowed** shall not be found unaccompanied **by works**... The connection with the subject lies in this, that the great extent and effects of Paul's labors were evidence of the resurrection of Christ; apart from that his work could not possibly have been undertaken and never would have achieved the results it accomplished. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**"BACK BREAKING"  
WORK FOR GOD!**

**I labored even more than** - More literally Paul says "I labored more abundantly than all of them" (See **F B Meyer's** discussion entitled [More Abundantly than they all](#))

**Jerry Bridges** has an interesting note - This passage used to puzzle me. It seemed as if Paul was trying to be both humble and proud. **How could anyone dare to state publicly that he had worked harder than all the other apostles?** But then I realized that Paul was ascribing even his hard work to the grace of God. Sometimes we hear some tired Christian describing how hard he has

worked in the service of God, teaching Sunday school for ten years straight, or sponsoring a difficult junior high youth group, or being one of the faithful few at Wednesday night prayer meeting. Perhaps we ourselves have been one of those tired Christians. If so, let's remember to credit our hard work and faithful labors strictly to the grace of God. (Bridges, J. The practice of godliness. Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress)

**Thomas Watson** (1663) - One would think this speech savored of pride; but the apostle pulls off the crown from his own head, and sets it upon the head of free grace, "Yet not I—but the grace of God which was with me!" Constantine used to write the name of Christ over the door, so should we over our duties. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for God's glory." 1 Corinthians 10:31 ([A Divine Cordial](#))

**I labored** ([2872](#))(**kopiao** [word study]) is derived from **kopos** which in secular Greek describes a literal beating or the weariness as though one had been beaten. **Kopos** was used to describe physical tiredness induced by work, exertion or heat. The verb **kopiao** speaks of intense, hard, wearisome toil even to the point of utter exhaustion and even fainting. The intensity of the work leaves the worker so weary that it is as if he had been physically beaten. **Kopiao** describes not so much the actual exertion as the weariness which follows the straining of all one's powers to the utmost. This is how Paul worked for the propagation of the gospel of the grace of God.

**Lenski** says **kopiao** describes "labor that requires strenuous exertion that tires. Yet this exertion on Paul's part is not the chief point as though Paul put more sensational effort into his work than the other apostles put into theirs."

The words of the hymn could well have described Paul's attitude...

And when my **task** on earth is done,  
When by Thy **grace** the vict'ry's won,  
E'en death's cold wave I will not flee,  
Since God through Jordan leadeth me.

[He Leadeth Me](#)

**NO PAIN**  
**NO GAIN**

The renowned 19th Century expositor **Bishop J. C. Ryle** speaks of the "back breaking" aspect of spiritual labor writing...

I will never shrink from declaring my belief that there are **no spiritual gains without pains**. I should as soon expect a farmer to prosper in business who contented himself with sowing his fields and never looking at them till harvest (cp 2Ti 2:6-note), as expect a believer to attain much holiness who was not diligent about his Bible-reading, his prayers and the use of his Sundays. Our God is a God who works by means." This principle not only applies to holiness, but to Christian service. Take Paul, for example. The secret of his success was "**God's grace plus hard work**" (1Co 15:9,10).

**Lightfoot** says that **kopiao** "is used especially of the labor undergone by the athlete in his training."

**MacArthur** adds that **kopiao** "does not stress the amount of work, but rather the effort. A man's reward from God is proportional to the excellence of his ministry and the effort he puts into it. Excellence combined with diligence mark a man worthy of the highest honor." ([MacArthur, John: 1 Timothy Moody Press](#))

**A T Robertson** - This is sober fact as shown by the Acts and Paul's Epistles. He had tremendous energy and used it. Genius is work, Carlyle said. Take Paul as a specimen.

**Andrew Murray** warns us not to get lost in "the work" reminding us that...

abounding work needs abounding grace as its source and strength. There often is abounding work without abounding grace. Just as any man may be very diligent in an earthly pursuit, or a heathen in his religious service of an idol, so men may be very diligent in doing religious work in their own strength, with but little thought of that grace which alone can do true, spiritual effective work. For all work that is to be really acceptable to God, and truly fruitful, not only for some visible result here on earth, but for eternity, the grace of God is indispensable. Paul continually speaks of his own work as owing everything to the grace of God working in him (1Co 15:10)... It is only by the grace of God working in us that we can do what are truly good works. It is only as we seek and receive abounding grace that we can abound in every good work. (Andrew Murray. Working For God)

As we see that it is God's own work we have to work out, that He works it through us, that in our doing it His

glory rests on us and we glorify Him, we shall count it our joy to give ourselves to live only and wholly for it... God's work must be done in God's way, and in God's power. It is spiritual work, to be done by spiritual men, in the power of the Spirit. The clearer our insight into, and the more complete our submission to, God's laws of work, the surer and the richer will be our joy and our reward in it... (Murray offered his) fervent prayer that God, the Great Worker, may make us true Fellow-Workers with Himself...

In both 1Co 15:10 and 2Co 12:9,11 Paul speaks of how he had abounded in the work of the Lord. 'In nothing was I behind the chiefest of the Apostles.' 'I labored more abundantly, than they all.' In both he tells how entirely it was all of God, who worked in Him, and not of himself. In the first he says: 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' And then in the second, showing how this grace is Christ's strength working in us, while we are nothing, he tells us: 'He said unto me: My grace is sufficient for thee: My power is made perfect in weakness.'

**May God give us 'the Spirit of revelation, enlightened eyes of the heart,' to see this wonderful vision, a man who knows himself to be nothing, glorying in his weakness, that the power of Christ may rest on him, and work through him, and who so labors more abundantly than all.**

**What does this teach us as workers for God...** God's work can only be done in God's strength... God's strength can only work in weakness... God's strength comes in our fellowship with Christ and His service... God's strength is given to faith, and the work that is done in faith... (Ed: To see Murray's discussion regarding each of these points, refer to [Chapter 26](#))

My brother (and sister)! be willing to yield yourself to the very utmost to God, that His power may rest upon you, may work in you. Do let God work through you. Offer yourself to Him for His work as the one object of your life. Count upon His working all in you, to fit you for His service, to strengthen and bless you in it. Let the faith and love of your Lord Jesus, whose strength is going to be made perfect in your weakness, lead you to live even as He did, to do the Father's will and finish His work. ([Chapter 26 - Laboring More Abundantly from Andrew Murray's book - "Working for God" - I highly recommend this little book to all who would desire to be fruitful and obtain an abundant harvest that endures throughout eternity!](#)) ([Check out the Chapter Titles in the Table of Contents](#))

Thomas Watson...

Improve this short time by doing all the service you can for God. Wisdom may be learned from an enemy. Satan is more fierce because he knows his time is short (Re 12:12). We would act more vigorously for God seeing our time is short. Our lives should be as jewels—though little in quantity yet great in value. Paul knew his stay in the world was short, therefore, how zealous and active was he for God while he lived! (1Co 15:10) ([Time's Shortness](#))

The faithful pastor **works hard** among his people and ministers to them as a shepherd cares for his sheep. In a parallel instruction Paul says to

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who **work hard** at preaching and teaching. (1Ti 5:17)

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**Samuel Bagster's Daily Light on the Daily Path** (highly recommended devotional which consists of the "pure milk of the Word") has the following evening entry...**August 24, Evening Sola Scriptura - NAS version**

**We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day;  
night is coming, when no man can work.**

THE soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is made fat.--He who waters will himself be watered.

My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest. Already he who reaps is receiving wages, and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.--The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season --Do business with this until I come back.

**I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**

**The Pulpit Commentary** commenting on 1Th 1:3 writes...

Love, the greatest of the three, manifests itself in **labor**. The word is a strong one; **"toil,"** perhaps, is a better rendering. **Toil** is not painful when it is prompted by love. True Christian love must lead the believer to toil for the gospel's sake, for the souls and bodies of those whom Jesus loved. The abundance of the Christian's labors is the measure of his love. "I labored more abundantly than they all" (says Paul 1Co. 15:10): "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

## THE "YET NOT I" PRINCIPLE

**Yet not I** - Paul gives the glory to the **grace of God** and the **God of grace**. I call it Paul's **"yet not I" principle** which is the "secret" of successful (God pleasing) service and genuine good (God) works (see Good Deeds).

**Lenski** adds that "It is literally true: **grace** alone achieved all these results. Paul is not merely ascribing them to **grace** with a sort of humble generosity on his part. When he thinks of what he originally was and then looks at these results he finds only one explanation: **"not I—but God's grace."**

**Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown** write that the **yet not I, but the grace** "implies, that though the human will concurred with God when brought by His Spirit into conformity with His will, yet **"grace"** so preponderated (exceeded in influence, power and importance) in the work, that his own co-operation is regarded as nothing, and grace as virtually the sole agent. (Compare 1Co 3:9 Mt 10:20 2Co 6:1 Php 2:12, 13)."

When you ponder the **"yet not I" principle**, think of the illustration of a wick and the oil that supplies the wick. If the oil runs, the wick burns. As long as there is oil, the wick doesn't burn out. This begs the question, if I am sensing that I am beginning to burn out in my ministerial endeavors, who is doing the work - "I" or the "grace of God"?

This principle also applies to our spiritual gifts, for they are gifts of grace from God and we can take no personal credit for them. As good stewards we are to use our gifts, but we are to continually recognize that they are gifts reflective of His grace working in and through us to bring glory to His Name (see 1Pe 4:10, 11-note).

**Paul** gives a parallel passage that speaks of the **"yet not I principle"** in second Corinthians writing...

Not that we are adequate (hikanos) in ourselves to consider **anything** (**Ed: not... anything** = nothing!) as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2Co 3:5-6).

In Colossians **Paul** alludes to the **"yet not I principle"** in declaring one of the chief goals of his ministry (**one we should all diligently seek to imitate as God enables us**)...

And we proclaim (kataggello) Him (Col 1:27b-note), admonishing (noutheteo) every man and teaching (didasko) every man with all wisdom (sophia), that we may present (paristemi) every man **complete (teleios** = fully developed, full grown, wanting nothing necessary for completeness, fully attaining to the purpose and goal for which we were designed and redeemed) in Christ (**Beloved, is that not the "great commission" - to train up "fully matured" disciples of Christ!** Mt 28:18, 19, 20 - **Have you been a believer for a number of years and attained a degree of spiritual maturity? Who then are you discipling?** Don't miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to "make disciples"! As a 70 year old saint, I appeal especially to you "retired" saints. [I began a group of 10 young men in late 30's at 6-7:30AM on Mondays - Sept, 2015 - with the goal that in 1-1.5 years they will take 2-4 faithful men under their wing to disciple] - Don't waste the precious years God has granted you, but seek to be wise stewards [Lk 12:42, 43, 44, 1Co 4:1,2] who bring forth a bountiful harvest of "ripe fruit" to His glory! I have grandchildren too and I enjoy them but Jesus has commanded us to make disciples [of them also!]. Don't spend your "ripest" years not coming alongside younger saints to "ripen" them in Christ!). And for this purpose also I labor (kopiao = same verb used here in 1Co 15:10 - So yes, you're correct, it is hard work to "make disciples" but it is soul satisfying, God pleasing labor which makes it sweet indeed!), striving (agonizomai - yes even "agonizing") (**"yet not I"**) according to His power (energeia = God's "energy" = God's power = God's grace), which mightily (dunamis) works (energeo = present tense = continually) **within**

me ([see notes below](#) regarding the similar phrase "with me"). (Col 1:28-note, Col 1:29-note) (**Related Resource:** Excellent message by C H Spurgeon discussing **spiritual maturity** - see **Ripe Fruit - Mp3** or **Ripe Fruit - Pdf**)

**J B Phillips** paraphrases the "**yet not I principle**" in Colossians 1:29-note this way...

This is what **I am working** at all the time, with all the **strength that God gives me**.

In **Philippians** Paul describes another "**yet not I principle**"...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed (hupakouo), not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out** (katargazomai in present imperative = command to make this their lifestyle) your salvation with fear and trembling for ("**yet not I**") it is God Who is at work (energeo = present tense = continually) in you, both to will and to work (energeo = present tense = continually) for His good pleasure. (Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note)

In **Ezekiel** in the context of God's promise of the New Covenant we read an OT version of **Php 2:12,13** "in reverse", which first describes God's provision and then calls for man to work out what God works in...

And I will put My Spirit within you (A reference to the promised Spirit associated with the New Covenant of grace - cp Lk 24:49, Ac 1:8) and cause you to walk in My statutes (**How?** His indwelling Spirit and His enabling grace!), and (the believer's responsibility) you will be careful to observe My ordinances ("**yet not I**" = We cannot observe God's ordinances in our own strength but need to remain continually dependent on His Spirit and grace). (Ezekiel 36:27)

In **Hebrews** in the context of the writer's prayer for his readers we find the same dichotomy of **man working** and **God working** in the *working* man...

(He 13:20-note = Now the God of peace... ) equip (katartizo) you in every good thing **to do** His will (The believer's responsibility), working in us (God's provision of grace) that which is pleasing in His sight (The fruit of grace working in the yielded diligent saint), through Jesus Christ, to Whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (He 13:21-note)

In the **KJV** we find the similar phrase "**I live; yet not I**" in a parallel passage wherein Paul declares...

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live (**yet not I**" Gal 2:20KJV), but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20-note)

**Warren Wiersbe** refers to the "**yet not I principle**" when he reminds believers that...

We stand in **grace**; it is the foundation for the Christian life (Ro. 5:1,2-note). **Grace** gives us the strength we need to be victorious soldiers ("**be strong**" [present imperative= command to continually yield your rights and depend on the Spirit of Christ, so that you might be strengthened in His sufficient power] *in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*" - 2Ti 2:1, 2-note, 2Ti 2:3, 4-note). **Grace** enables us to suffer without complaining (**Ed:** Php 2:14, 15-note), and even to use that suffering for God's glory (*My grace is sufficient* [arkeo] *for you, for* [My] *power* [dunamis] *is perfected* [teleioo] *in weakness.*" = 2Cor 12:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9-note, 2Co 12:10-note). When a Christian turns away from living by God's **grace** (**Ed comment: In other words he forgets the "yet not I principle"**), he must depend on his own power (**Ed: The "I principle" = the middle letter in sin!**). This leads to failure and disappointment. This is what Paul means by "**fallen from grace**" (Gal 5:4)-moving out of the **sphere of grace** into the **sphere of Law**, ceasing to depend on God's resources and depending on our own resources. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#)) (Bolding and color and references added)

**Jesus** alludes to the "**yet not I principle**" in John 15 teaching...

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides (present tense = as one's lifestyle. It does not refer to perfection [that's glorification] but "direction") in Me, and I in him, he bears (present tense) much fruit; for apart from Me you can (dunamai - inherent ability to perform which for a believer speaks of continual surrender to and reliance on the indwelling Spirit. Present tense = continually) do nothing (Greek word here "ou" which signifies absolutely nothing. Zero of eternal value!). (Jn 15:5)

Here is an Old Testament version of the "**yet not I principle**" in Zechariah...

Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying,

**'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'**

says the LORD of hosts. 7 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth (Zerubbabel's responsibility - even this was enabled by grace which led him to appropriate praise!) the top stone with shouts of "**Grace, grace to it!**"' (Zechariah 4:6,7)

**Henry Alford** writes that...

the Grace of God worked with him in so overwhelming a measure, compared to his own working, that it was no longer the work of himself but of divine Grace. On the **co-agency** of the **human will** with **divine Grace**, but in subordination (the human will), (see Mt 10:20, 2Co 5:20, 2Co 6:1, 1Co 3:9) (See below for these 4 passages each of which emphasize the "yet not I" principle) ([The New Testament for English Readers](#))

"For it is **not you who speak**, but it is the **Spirit of your Father who speaks in you**" (Mt 10:20)

**Alford rightly reminds us:** It is to be observed that in the great work of God in the world, **human individuality sinks down and vanishes**, and God alone, His Christ, His Spirit, is the great Worker (the "**yet not I principle**" as shown in the following passages)...

Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ** (Man's Responsibility), as though ("yet not I" but) **God were making an appeal through us** (Divine Provision); we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2Co 5:20)

And **working** ("yet not I" but) **together with Him** (Our part/God's part), we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2Co 6:1).

For we are **God's fellow workers** (**sunergos** [word study] = Our part ["yet not I" but] God's part); you are God's field, God's building. (1Co 3:9)

**Spurgeon...**

Brethren, you are not to shut your eyes to the gracious change which God's Holy Spirit has wrought in you. You may speak of it, and speak of it often, but always guard against taking any of the honour to yourselves, and be especially careful to put the crown upon the right head (cp Jer 9:23, 24 1Co 1:31, Ps 115:1).

**Albert Barnes** pictures Paul saying...

I do not attribute it to myself. I would not boast of it. The fact is plain and undeniable, that I have so laboured. But I would not attribute it to myself. I would not be proud or vain. I would remember my former state; would remember that I was a persecutor; would remember that all my disposition to labour, and all my ability, and all my success, are to be traced to the mere favour and mercy of God. So every man who has just views feels, who has been favoured with success in the ministry. If a man has been successful as a preacher; if he has been self-denying, laborious, and the instrument of good, he cannot be insensible to the fact, and it would be foolish affectation to pretend ignorance of it.

**Vine** explains the significance of "**yet not I**" and draws an important personal application noting that the...

two were in cooperation, **Paul** and **God's grace**, but Paul was only the instrument, willing and active indeed, but only the tool; hence in the "**yet not I**" he rules himself out, an example for all of us. It was **grace** that produced the **efficiency** and the **effects**. ([Vine, W. Collected writings of W. E. Vine. Nashville: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** writes that...

**To live by God's grace means to depend on Him to enable us.** We aren't striving in our own power to do something for Him. Rather, He's working in and through us to accomplish the good pleasure of His will (cp Php 2:13-note, He 13:21-note). It's the difference between **legalism** and **life**. The enemy wants God's people to concentrate on *their* imperfections and failures, because that keeps them from getting lost in the greatness and grace of God. Yes, there's a time for godly introspection and confession, but the Christian life isn't a "perpetual (spiritual) autopsy". It's a feast! So after we've washed ourselves (**Ed:** Actually after "He" has washed us - cp Titus 3:5-note), let's enjoy the feast to the glory of God (Ge 5:7, 8). ([Wiersbe, W. W. Be Authentic. An Old testament study. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books](#)) (**Bolding** added)

**HE GIVETH MORE GRACE**

[Play Hymn](#)

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done,  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure;  
His power no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus  
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

**But the grace of God with me** - Wuest translates it "but the grace of God which labored with me".

**But** - I love the Greek here which presents a dramatic contrast - *"buk ego **de** **alla** e charis"* - literally "*not I **but**, **but** the grace*"! Paul, in a sense, "stutters" in the Greek, using two words of contrast (**de** and **alla**) which powerfully draws a distinction between **his work** and that of **God's grace**.

**AMAZING GRACE**  
**"INTIMATE" GRACE**

**With me (sun/syn emoi)** - There are two conjunctions in Greek that can mean "**with**" - **meta** and **sun/syn**. In his phrase "**with me**", Paul chose "**sun/syn**" which is the more "*intimate*" of the two prepositions. In other words, while **meta** can describe fellowship or partnership (which would certainly be a reasonable way to describe grace working in believers), **syn/sun** is even better because it speaks of **union** which implies a nearer and closer connection than **meta**. It is somewhat like our English words where "*with*" differs from "*among*" if that makes sense.

In the **Gospel of Mark** we see a similar spiritual dynamic using the prefix **sun/syn**...

And they (the disciples Mk 16:14) went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord **worked with** (**sunergeo** from **sun/syn** + **érgon** = work. The **present tense** = continually worked with) them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. (Mk 16:20)

**Comment:** What an encouraging verse--The Lord Himself intimately (sun/syn - in union) working with His disciples as reflected in Acts 1:8 where the promised Spirit (of Christ) would indwell them and would be their source of strength (and grace) enabling them to be His witnesses.

**Constable** adds: It was a continuation of Jesus' work on earth in a real sense because He continued to work with them and confirmed their preaching with signs (cf. Acts 1:1, 2). These first disciples provided a positive example for all succeeding generations of disciples to follow.

**Dr. Wayne Barber** gives the following illustration to help us understand the difference between **syn/sun** and **meta**...

One Greek word for "**with**" is **meta**. We are **with** one another (**Ed note:** Wayne is speaking to his congregation, those who are "**with**" him to listen). The Lord Jesus was **with** them when He was on this earth. He was alongside them, in a room together **with**. That's the word **meta**.

Another word for "together with" is the little word **sun**, which means not only are we **together with** one another, but we are so mixed in that nobody can tell the difference one from the other. We can't get apart from each other.

Let me give you the illustration... making biscuits. Let's just say you take all the ingredients and put them out on a piece of waxed paper. You put the flour down and the shortening or whatever else goes in them. You put it all on the piece of paper. Now all of the ingredients can still be separated, but at the same time they are **with** each other—**meta**. Okay? But take all of those ingredients and mix them together. Just stir them all together. Cut them out and put them on a pan. Let's put them in the oven, and let's bake them. After they have baked

for a while they come out as luscious biscuits. Once they are baked, that's that little word **sun**. No scientist has ever been able to separate those ingredients out again.

**In sum, Paul is saying that yes he is laboring but his intimate, inseparable "partner" is the grace of God.** I don't want to take this further than Paul intended (so be a Berean! Acts 17:11), but in a sense Paul is in "union" with God's grace (cp the Spirit of grace - Heb 10:29). Paul understood the principle that God's *commandments* always include His *enablements* -- to whatever task God calls His servants, He always sufficiently supplies so that they might succeed.

**Thomas Watson** - If we would keep up the vigor of devotion during evil times, let us beg God for confirming grace. Habitual grace may flag; Peter had habitual grace—yet was foiled; he lost a single battle, though not the victory. We need exciting, assisting, sustaining grace; not only grace in us—but grace with us (1Cor. 15:10). Sustaining grace (which is a fresh gale of the Spirit) will carry us undauntedly through the world's blustering storms. Thus shall we be able to keep up our heroic zeal in corrupt times, and be as Mount Zion—which cannot be moved.

**Lenski** makes the point that "It would, however, be a mistake to picture **God's grace** and **Paul's effort** as **two horses together drawing a wagon**, for the two are not coordinate. Paul's effort is, in the last analysis, due to God's grace, and it is put forth only as long as the Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him. "

**Wiersbe** agrees adding that "It is encouraging to know that the God who **calls us** also **equips us** to do His work (**Ed**: Whose work? cp Ep 2:10-note). We have nothing in ourselves that enables us to serve Him; the ministry must **all** come from God (1Co 15:9, 10; Php 4:13-note; 1Ti 1:12). However, we must not be passive; we must cultivate God's gifts, use them, and develop them in the ministry of the local church and wherever God puts us. ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor](#)) (Bolding added)

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**John Piper** applies the truth in 1Corinthians 15:10 to **sanctification**...

In 1Corinthians 15:10 Paul does a bit of self-examination in order to know where he stands with the other apostles. In 1Cor 15:9 he says he is **the least of the apostles** because he persecuted the church. But then in verse 10 he bears witness to the work of God's grace in his life since those horrible days:

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

The word **sanctification** is not used here, but the reality of **sanctification** is described, namely, a persecutor of the church **being transformed** into a hard-working, obedient apostle. And three times in this beautiful verse Paul affirms that this transformation is owing not to himself but to the **grace of God**. First, he says, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Second, he says, "God's grace to me was not in vain." Third, he says, "I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

This is the way a saint ought to think and feel and talk about his sanctification. Your life is a work of grace. By God's grace you were chosen for salvation. By God's grace you were called to a life of holiness. And by God's grace you are now being sanctified. No matter how hard you work—and you should work hard!—the lasting fruit of your labor is always owing to God's grace.

And if our comfort and hope are in any way dependent on the transformation of our lives, that comfort is still an eternal comfort and that hope is still a good hope, because it is "not I, but the grace of God with me" that guarantees the progress I need in sanctification. ([Why Hope? Grace!](#))

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**Robert Sheffield** gives the following illustration of hard work...

Paul used the illustration of a farmer. The farmer is a hard worker. If you don't apply this to commitment and discipline, you won't get anywhere. How often do we experience hard labor and wearisome toil in our Christian lives?

Some years ago in Canada I joined a labor union to get some temporary work. On my first day of working the foreman assigned me and two other laborers the job of taking out of storage some large sheets of plywood at a warehouse. The foreman dropped us off at the warehouse and said he would be back for us at noon.

As soon as he left, the two other men sat down, lit up their cigarettes, and relaxed. As a Christian who believed in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, I went ahead and worked by myself. This so upset the other

two that they refused to be assigned with me the following day.

Many people don't want to work hard. This is true in the Christian world too. Few are committed to the labor it takes to do the things God wants done. This is what Paul encouraged Timothy to do. (Discipleship Journal: Issue 6. Colorado Springs: The Navigators/NavPress)

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**Yet not I** - Here is the "secret" of the Christian life in a nutshell! Not you striving (referring to your "natural" strength) to live the Christian life, but learning to die to self (cp Mk 8:34, 35) that He might live His life (in His supernatural strength) through you. To a large extent, this is a mysterious coalition or cooperation and one which is difficult to explain but it is the (only) way of victorious living in Christ, abiding in the Vine living (Jn 15:5), a walking by the Spirit type life (Gal 5:16-note)

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## GREAT GRACE

Annie Johnson Flint

His grace is great enough to meet the great things,  
The crashing waves that overwhelm the soul,  
The roaring winds that leave us stunned and breathless,  
The sudden storms beyond our life's control.

His grace is great enough to meet the small things,  
The little pin-prick troubles that annoy,  
The insect worries, buzzing and persistent,  
The squeaking wheels that grate upon our joy.

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**The Woodpecker** - The fable says that a woodpecker pecking away at the trunk of a dead tree when it was struck by lightning, fracturing the tree down the middle. As the woodpecker flew away, he looked back and said "Look what a great work I have accomplished." I fear that there are a great many "woodpeckers" in churches (even in pulpits)! In 1Co 15:10 Paul is saying "See what a great work **God** accomplished."

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**Oswald Chambers** observed, "Confidence in the natural world is self-reliance, in the spiritual world it is God-reliance." Between the two, God-reliance is the strongest. A self-confident person may be able to do all that he believes he is capable of doing. One whose confidence is in God can do the unexpected... Like Moses (inarticulate), we too can rely upon the promise of God's presence. The Lord assured Moses, "I will be with you" (Ex 3:12). In the same way, Jesus promised us that He would be with us "to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). God will use our natural abilities, but is not limited to them. Our real strength lies in the power of the Holy Spirit. His presence and power enable us to say as the apostle Paul did in today's verse, "by the grace of God I am what I am" (1Co 15:10).

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**Our Image Problem** —People who clearly understand their own strengths and weaknesses are better able to accept themselves as they are and accomplish more in life. They can identify with the person who said, "I'm only someone, but I am someone. I can't do everything, but I can do something."

The apostle Paul recognized his liabilities, but he took his God-given assets and used them for eternal profit. His self-acceptance was based on God's acceptance of him in Christ. God's grace enabled him to affirm his apostleship while living with the painful memory of persecuting the church (1Co 15:9; 1Ti 1:13, 14, 15).

Paul didn't have a bad self-image when he called himself the "least of the apostles," nor was it false humility that prompted him to say he was "not worthy to be called an apostle" (1Co 15:9). Neither was it undue pride when he affirmed that he "labored more abundantly" than all of the other apostles (v.10). He was simply recognizing his human frailties while extolling the effectiveness of God's grace. He knew he was able to serve God because he had been forgiven.

Trusting Jesus as Savior and Lord and being honest with ourselves will enable us to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am."

That's a mature kind of self-acceptance. — by Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We all have faults uniquely ours,  
Those flaws that cause self-blame,  
But God accepts us as we are,  
And we must do the same.  
—DJD

**Our value is not in what we do for God  
but in what Christ has done for us.**

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**William Taylor** has an interesting sermon on the similarities between Galatians 2:20KJV and 1Cor 15:10 and how they impact one's individuality...

This expression, used twice by the Apostle Paul, and each time in a passage referring to his personal experience, may for that reason, as I believe, be regarded by us as characteristic of the manner in which he was accustomed to think and speak concerning himself and his work. He did not ignore his own individuality. He knew himself. He had a clear and correct apprehension of the qualities of character, idiosyncrasies of disposition, and powers of mind by which he was distinguished from all other men. He knew what he could do, and what he could not do. He understood his own peculiarities, aptitudes, abilities, and limitations. He estimated these, also, at their true value, and put them in their proper place. He did not reckon them as of supreme importance, for he is careful to say, "**I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;**" and "**I labored, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.**" But neither did he regard them as of no account, for he distinctly specifies in the one case that the life which he describes was his life, "I live;" and in the other, that the labors which he performed were his works, "I labored." There was that about his life as a Christian man, and his labors as a Christian Apostle, which was clearly traceable to his own personality; but the energizing influence which gave holiness to the one, and efficacy to the other, came from the grace and spirit of God, who wrought in him and through him and with him. The "I" was regenerated by Christ, yet so that it remained the "I;" and the labors were made effectual by the grace of God, yet so that they were conditioned and shaped by the "I." His life was different from that of every one else because it was his life; but it was holy because it was Christ that lived in him. His labors were distinct from those of others because he could say, "I labored;" but they were so abundant and so fruitful because he could say, "I labored, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." Fitly, therefore, may we take out' two texts --which, indeed, are not so much two as one--as suggesting for our consideration at this time the place and power of individuality in Christian life and work...

... To sum up, then, let us distil the essence of our discourse into these two lessons. First, respect your own individuality. Be content to be yourself; but let that self be purified, energized, and inhabited by the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not attempt to force yourself into the mould of the experience of another. Be not concerned if your Christian experience should be different from that of others. Come to Christ in your own way, only see to it that it is Christ you come to; live your own life, but be sure it is a Christian life; do your own work, but take good heed that it is Christian work. David in Saul's armor was not more encumbered than you would be were you to force yourselves into the individuality of another. Stand then on your right to be yourself. As one has well said, "No really great man does his work by imposing his maxims on his disciples.

**He evokes their life. He awakens them to be themselves. This is what Christ does for His disciples. He gets at the inner fountain of their being and then lets the streams of His influence flow thence through their individuality.**

Let Him do so with you.

**Then in the second place give God all the glory  
for what you are and have done.**

It is he that worketh in you to will and to do, and the language of your hearts ought ever to be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." (Ps 115:1) He is the noblest preacher who is distinctively himself, imitating no other's manner and copying no other's style, while yet he preaches not himself, but Christ; and that is the highest type of Christian who is himself, while yet Christ is seen and felt to be living in that self, and working through it. This will secure **originality of enterprise** as well as **success of effort**, and lead to the same result in our case as in Paul's, when after his conversion it is

recorded of those around him that "they glorified God in him." (Read the entire sermon - [1 Corinthians 15:10 and Gal 2:20 - The Place and Power of Individuality in Christian Life and Work](#))

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C H Spurgeon describes some

Now, in closing, let us consider our subject Practically. What is the practical use of this text, "By the grace of God I am what I am"?

**Surely, as I have already reminded you, it is designed to keep us humble.**

Depend upon it, if we do not take this text for our motto every day, there is the rod of the covenant ready for us. He will soon be in a storm who does not see God's grace in the sunshine. If his mercies surround us, and our days roll happily along, but we begin to ascribe our greatness and our riches to ourselves, it will not be long before God will bring us down. It may be so in your experience, especially if you soar upon the wings of self-confidence. As surely as you begin to get strong in your own strength, there is an hour of weakness close at hand. Whenever you are full of self, it will not be long before you learn your own emptiness; for he who begins to grow rich in himself is next door to poverty; nay, he is ready clothed in rags. No, my brethren, there is no safe walking unless we make this the staff on which we lean, "By the grace of God we are what we are." While we stick to this as our hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, everlasting motto, we shall not go astray, nor shall we experience those terrible down-castings which are the inevitable result of our up-flyings in self-confidence. Come then, beloved, from this day let us learn humility, let us tread our pride in the dust, and say, "Why should we be proud? By the grace of God we are what we are."

**Then, in the light of our text, let us learn charity.**

Why should I be harsh towards those who are not what I am? I wish that some persons, who think themselves very sound in doctrine, would recollect our text. If another brother is thought to be unsound they are ready to cut him in pieces; it would be better if they were to say, before using their sword for such a purpose, "By the grace of God we are what we are." Though you should be never so sound and right yourselves, be gentle with the brother who has not received so much grace as you have. Good John Newton used to say that, for a Calvinist to be proud, was the most inconsistent thing in the world; because, by his own profession, there were truths which no man could receive or understand of himself; so, why should he boast of his own attainments, and why should he blame others for not doing what he knows they cannot do of themselves? If our brethren cannot see as well as we, can, why should we be angry with them because our eyes are better than theirs? I see no reason for being angry with a blind man because he cannot see; that is the very reason why we should pity his infirmity. So, let us seek to relieve those who are burdened, to bring back those who have wandered, to strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees, and, to the best of our power, to lead others into that glorious light in which we ourselves are walking, for by the grace of God we are what we are.

**Moreover this should teach us hopefulness concerning other men.**

There is a drunken man, you think he can never be converted, but why not? The grace that saved you is sufficient to save him. You sometimes meet with an infidel; perhaps you have one in your family, — a father, or brother, or sister, — and you are apt to say, "Well, it is no use trying to get such an one to go to the house of God, all he would do would be to mock and jeer. If the minister should make a mistake, he would seize upon it, and use it as his stock-in-trade for the abuse of a week. If there be a fault among God's children, he is sure to notice it, and to make it the theme of his reproach, so he had better be kept away from them." But again I say, the grace that saved you is sufficient to save him; never give anyone up, even as God did not give you up. I always think that, as God has converted me by his grace, he can convert anybody; the conversion of any other sinner is not any more difficult to omnipotence, neither is it any easier, for omnipotence knows nothing of degrees. What marvellous things Christ has done, and done in some of us, too! Some of you must weep over that verse in which the apostle says, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed;" and you say, "Yes, and to God be all the glory that he hath made us what we are." Therefore, let us continue to look after those whom Satan has ensnared, even the most hard-hearted sinners, and seek to bring them under the saving influence of the grace of God.

**Then, lastly, if we are what we are "by the grace of God," this should teach us greater thankfulness.**

Children of the Heavenly King, never forget to praise your God. We sometimes fail in this duty. We have had many meetings for prayer, to ask God to bless us in our manifold labors; now let us have some meetings for

praise, to bless the Lord for his great goodness to us. I have heard that, in some parts of New England, there used to be a day of fasting every month, to mourn for the iniquity of the land, and so on; and, at last, some senator proposed that they should have a feast, and thank God for the mercies which they had received; and, truly, he was in the right. It is not good always to be fasting, we must feast sometimes.

**An old Puritan says that we take in breath by prayer,  
by a sort of heavenly inspiration, —  
and that we breathe it out again by praise:**

Dear brethren and sisters, if you and I were to sing as heartily as we ought to sing, what a joyous song of praise there would be! If our voices could but be tuned to the deservings of God, what songs and sonnets would make glad this wilderness! You remember Ralph Erskine's sonnet on the battle in heaven, — the great contention of the bards in paradise. He pictures them all contending as to who should have the lowest place, and which should most loudly praise the Lord. There were the babes snatched from their mothers' breasts; they claimed the lowest place because they had gone straight to heaven without any trials or troubles. But the gray-headed men, who had been divinely supported under the afflictions of many years, said that they owed the most to sovereign grace. Then came those who had been converted in their early years, and who said that they had already had a heaven below, so they could sing the loudest of all. Then came the penitent thief, who said that he had the greatest cause to praise the Lord for he had been converted at the last. While some declared that they must praise God most because they had been the blackest sinners, others said that they would praise him most for the restraining grace which had kept them from sin; and so the strife went on until they agreed, each one, to sing with all his might to the praise of that everlasting love which inscribed their names in the Lamb's book of life, that great love which bought them with Jesus' precious blood, and that omnipotent love which attended them all their journey through, and landed them at last in heaven. ([1Corinthians 15:10 Lesson on Divine Grace](#)) (Or you can download an **Mp3 version** with a British accent to listen while you drive or run or bike - **1Corinthians 15:10 Lessons on Divine Grace**)

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**Octavius Winslow's** devotional on 1Co 15:10 from **Daily Walking with God...**

We should be always careful to distinguish between the denial of self and the denial of the life of God within us. The most entire renunciation of ourselves, the most humiliating acknowledgment of our personal unworthiness, may harmonize with the strongest assurance and profession of Christ living in us. Self-denial does not necessarily involve grace-denial.

**It is the profoundest act of humility in a Christian man  
to acknowledge the grace of God in his soul.**

Never is there so real a crucifixion, never so entire a renunciation of self, as when the heart, in its lowly but deep and grateful throbbings, acknowledges its indebtedness to sovereign grace, and in the fervor of its adoring love, summons the whole Church to listen to its recital of the great things God has done for it—"Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul." Oh yes!

**It is a self-denying life.**

Listen to Job—"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:6)

Listen to Isaiah—"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." (Isa 6:5)

Listen to the penitent publican—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" (Lk 18:13)

Listen again to Paul—"I live, yet not I." (Gal 2:20)

Thus does a sense of sin, and a believing sight of Christ, lay the soul low before God in self-renunciation and self-abhorrence.

Judge your spiritual condition, dear reader, by this characteristic of the inner life.

Is it yours? Has there been this renunciation of your sinful self and of your righteous self?

Has the Spirit of God emptied you? has the grace of God humbled you?

Has the life of God crucified you?

Are you as one in whom Christ lives, walking humbly with God?

Oh, it is the essence of vital godliness, it is the very life of true religion. If Christ is living in you, you are a humble soul. Pride never existed in the heart of Christ. His whole life was one act of the profoundest self-abasement. In the truest and in the fullest sense of the emphatic declaration, "He humbled Himself." (Php 2:8) It is impossible, then, that He who was thus "meek and lowly in heart," (Mt 11:29) can dwell in one whom "pride compasses as a chain." "I live, yet not I," are two states of the renewed soul, as inseparable as any cause and effect. A humble and a self-denying Christ dwells only with a humble and a self-denying soul. If your gifts inflate you, if your position exalts you, if your usefulness engenders pride, if the honor and distinction which God or man has placed upon you has turned you aside from the simplicity of your walk, and set you upon the work of self-seeking, self-advancing, so that you are not meek and gentle, child-like, and Christ-like in spirit, be sure of this—you are either not a partaker of the life of Christ, or else that life is at a low ebb in your soul. Which of the two, do you think, is your real state?

"By the grace of God I am what I am!" 1 Cor. 15:10

GRACE is one of the most precious and significant terms of the Bible.

Grace tells of God's free and unconditional choice of a people, whom He everlastingly loved.

It speaks ...

of His mercy to the miserable,

of His pardon to the guilty,

of His favor to the lost,

of His free and boundless love to poor sinners.

None are saved but those who are saved by ...

electing grace,

sovereign grace,

free grace.

Also, all the precious streams of present ...

sanctification,

peace,

joy,

and hope

flow from this divine and marvelous Fountain!

What a heart is His! The Lord of all grace ...

all pardoning grace,

all accepting grace,

all sanctifying grace,

all comforting grace ...

to the ungracious,

to the unworthy,

to the poor,

to the bankrupt,

to the vile,

to the sinful.

"By the grace of God I am what I am!"  
Marvelous declaration!

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**R K Hughes** in his excellent book **Disciplines of a Godly Man** writes that...

The man who wisely disciplines himself for godliness understands the necessity of prioritizing and realism and prayer and accountability and that failure is part of success, but his greatest wisdom and impetus comes from his understanding of grace. Everything in his life comes from God's grace — sola gratia — grace alone!...

Salvation is by grace alone, and living the Christian life is by grace alone also. James makes this stunning declaration regarding the believer's universal experience in this world: "[B]ut he gives us more grace" (Jas 4:6). This is not saving grace, but grace to live our lives as we ought in this fallen world — literally, "greater grace." There is always "more grace."

An artist once submitted a painting of Niagara Falls to an exhibition, but neglected to give it a title. The gallery, faced with the need to supply one, came up with these words: "More to Follow." Old Niagara Falls, spilling over billions of gallons per year for thousands of years, has more than met the needs of those below and is a fit emblem of the floods of God's grace He showers upon us. There is always more to follow! The Apostle John referred to this reality, saying, "For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (John 1:16, NASB) — literally, "grace instead of grace," or as others have rendered it, "grace following grace" or "grace heaped upon grace." "

For daily need there is daily grace;  
for sudden need, sudden grace;  
for overwhelming need, overwhelming grace.

**--John Blanchard**

As we tackle the disciplines of a godly man, we must remember it is a matter of grace from beginning to end.

Consider slowly and carefully Paul's words, "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them — yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1Corinthians 15:10, italics added). You see, there is no contradiction between grace and hard work. In fact, grace produces spiritual sweat!

**It is God's grace that energizes us  
to live out the disciplines of a godly man.**

There is always more grace.

#### Grace for Purity

Grace for Marriage

Grace for Fatherhood

Grace for Friendship

Grace for Mind

Grace for Devotion

Grace for Prayer

Grace for Worship

#### Grace for Integrity

Grace for Tongue

Grace for Work

Grace for Church

Grace for Leadership

Grace for Giving

Grace for Witness

Grace for Ministry

Brothers, when we attempt to do His will, He always gives more grace.

When we have exhausted our store of endurance,  
When our strength has failed ere the day is half done;  
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources,  
Our Father's full giving is only begun.

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,  
His power has no boundary known unto men;  
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,  
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.

—Annie Johnson Flint

The believer's eternal confession! (John MacDuff, "The Night Watches") "By the Grace of God — I am what I am!" 1 Corinthians 15:10

This is the believer's eternal confession!

Grace found him a rebel against God — it leaves him a son of God!

Grace found him wandering at the gates of Hell — it leaves him at the gates of Heaven!

Grace devised the scheme of Redemption. Justice never would; Reason never could. And it is Grace which carries out that scheme. No sinner would ever have sought God — but "by grace." The thickets of Eden would have proved Adam's grave — had not grace called him out! Saul would have lived and died the haughty self-righteous persecutor — had not grace laid him low! The thief on the cross would have continued breathing out his blasphemies — had not grace arrested his tongue and tuned it for glory! "Out of the knottiest timber," says Rutherford, "God can make vessels of mercy for service in the high palace of glory!"

"I came, I saw, I conquered!" may be inscribed by the Savior on every monument of His grace. "I came to the sinner; I looked upon him; and with a look of omnipotent love — I conquered him!"

Believer, you would have been this day a wandering star, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever! You would have been Christless, hopeless, and portionless; had not grace constrained you! And it is grace which, at this moment, "keeps" you. You have often been a Peter — forsaking your Lord — but brought back to Him again. Why have you not been a Demas or a Judas? "I have prayed for you — that your faith fail not!" Is not this your own comment and reflection on life's retrospect: "Yet not I — but the grace of God which was with me!"

Seek to realize your dependence on this grace every moment.

"More grace! more grace!" needs to be your continual cry.

His infinite supply — is commensurate with your infinite need.

The treasury of grace, though always emptying — is always full.

The key of prayer which opens it — is always at hand!

And the Almighty Bestower of the blessings of grace — is always "waiting to be gracious."

The recorded promise can never be cancelled or reversed: "My grace is sufficient for you."

The grace of God is the source of lesser temporal blessings — as well as of higher spiritual blessings. Grace accounts for the crumb of daily bread — as well as for the crown of eternal glory! But even in regard to earthly mercies, never forget the CHANNEL of grace: "through Christ Jesus!" It is sweet thus to connect every blessing, even the smallest and humblest token of providential bounty — with Calvary's cross — to have the common blessings of life stamped with "the print of the nails!" It makes them doubly precious to think, "All this flows from Jesus!"

"By the Grace of God — I am what I am!" Reader! seek to dwell much on this inexhaustible theme!