

## The Transforming Power of Grace David J Keyser PhD

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.

Ephesians 2: 8 KJV

### Dependence On God

It is important to understand that to walk in the grace of God we must first acknowledge both with our minds and our hearts that we are totally dependent on God. This is the first big problem. Today in Western culture we are taught that independence and self-reliance are the most important virtues that we can possess. In religious circles we are taught that we are dependent on God for our salvation because we are sinners and desperately in need of the help and deliverance that only He can provide. This is true, but in the teaching of this we are so often left with the impression deep down in our beings that the dependence is because of our sin alone. This is not true.

We were originally designed to be dependent on God. Adam was given great power to be in charge of the entire natural world. But he had this power in dependence on God. He lost this power when he took his life into his own hands. Jesus said that he did not do anything that he did not see the Father doing. Jesus walked in total dependence on God the Father.

Dependence on God is not wrong. Dependence on God is good. When our sins are dealt with by the cross of Christ, we are free from the consequences of them. But we were never supposed to be free from God. He wants us to draw from him continually. He delights in meeting our every need.

The life of faith is an adventure with God meeting every need, even anticipating our needs and arranging the supply before we ask. This is healthy Christianity. To walk in grace, when we can only stop our sinning by degrees, requires us to be willingly dependent as a lifelong lifestyle. Only after we embrace this, can we truly understand grace.

Many earthly dependencies have unwanted side effects. Dependence on God has no unwanted side effects. The unwanted side effects of drugs, for example, are that they can in themselves be damaging to a person. Also, they will lead to a dependency which will take a person away from the good things in life. And, last but not least, the supply of the drug may be interrupted or stopped and painful withdrawal will result. A dependency on God will not lead to any of these consequences.

God is not damaging to the person. His goal is to free the person and help that person to realize all of his or her potential. A dependency on God will not take us away from the good things in life. Rather, it will bring us into a complete fulfillment of the good things in life like health and love and relationships and joy.

Finally, the prospect of not being able to receive God or the blessings of God at any time in the future is not possible, at least not from God's side of the relationship. God is always available to us and always will be in this life and in eternity. This dependency does certainly imply relationship. We are to live in a living relationship with a living God.

This article is not about rules. The rules, called the Law, were added because of the growth of disobedience. But rules have never been the object of God's relationship with his people. A religion of rules is not the Christian faith; it is not the faith that Paul teaches; it is not the faith that Jesus teaches. They teach relationship with the living God. Sometimes it is easier for people to

learn to walk by rules than by relationship. Sometimes people prefer rules to relationship. “Just tell me what the rules are and I will do it.”

Galatians 3:21 KJV Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

Relationship is harder than rules because there is a living being on both sides of the issue. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is one of relationship. Rules lead to death; relationship leads to life. They say that the three most important things in real estate are location, location and location. The three most important things in the Christian life are relationship, relationship and relationship; relationship first with God and then with our fellow human beings.

The peace of God that accompanies grace is a special peace. The peace of God is not dependent on circumstances. Circumstances can be difficult and we can still have the peace of God that comes from walking in relationship with him. The peace of God passes or goes beyond understanding. Sometimes, this makes Christians look irrational. This is not because they do not understand rational conduct but because they have been enabled to live beyond the rational when necessary. Most of the time they will probably live within rational guidelines and understanding.

### Breaking The Vicious Circle

There is a vicious circle that torments the sincere Christian. This circle simply moves from being content in holy living, then to failure by sinning, to repentance, to a greater effort to improve, to temporary improvement, then back to failure and around again. The Christian believer can love Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit; he or she can love God’s law and hate his own sinful

nature; he can repent when he fails over and over again, and begin his quest again. But the circle continues and continues.

The more times the believer fails the worse he feels about himself. His confidence wains and he cries out to God for supernatural help. If he continues to fail for too long a time, the time varies by believer, he just gives up and lives the carnal life. Sometimes he rations himself in his journeys into carnality and comforts himself that he could be worse or he could be as bad as certain other persons. The vicious circle needs to be broken. Paul and John knew this circle well and they leave us keys on how to break it more frequently and come to live on a higher spiritual plain.

#### Paul's Escape Clause

Romans 7:18 WEB For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. 19 For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. 20 But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me.

How can Paul hold this absurd position? The immature Christian calls it a "cop out." Paul is just saying that since we are hopeless in our human condition, then we should just give up and rely on God to make up the difference. If only we could get rid of our own conscience!

But Paul knew a secret, he had a revelation. It is simply this: If we are truly sick of our carnal nature then we need to disown it. Every time we accept the power of the carnal nature we go back to "square one" to start all over again.

There is a story, whether true or not, that when Queen Cleopatra gave birth to Ptolemy Caesarian, the child of Julius Caesar, she instructed her servant to take the baby and lay it at Caesar's feet. The servant protested that this was not appropriate for the Egyptian Crown Prince

to be laid at the feet of a Roman. Cleopatra took a firm hold on the servant and said, “Do as I command you! If Caesar picks the child up, he is acknowledging my son as his rightful heir under Roman law.” The servant obeyed and Caesar picked up the child.

I use this illustration to make a simple point, when you stumble in your Christian walk and it grieves your conscience, do not “pick up the baby.” When you claim it, it becomes your inheritance from then on once again. Of course, if what you did was a crime, then you will have to deal with the civil law. But most of the daily sins of sincere Christians offend God rather than men.

What does this tell us? Quit acknowledging that your carnal nature is the boss. Disown it. Move on in victory. Some may say that this is pure presumption. How can we disown our own obvious actions? Were we not born in sin? Surely we are not trying hard enough.

Philippians 1: 6 KJV Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

2 Peter 1:3 KJV According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

If the believer is not totally sincere, this is presumption and it will not work. The vicious circle will not be broken. If the believer is totally sincere in his or her hatred and disgust for whatever sins they are fighting, then it is faith. If it is faith, it will break the circle.

Romans 1:17 KJV For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

From “faith to faith” means that when one faith victory is achieved another is ready to be won.

### John’s Escape Clause

1 John 3:18 WEB My little children, let’s not love in word only, or with the tongue only, but in deed and truth. 19 And by this we know that we are of the truth, and persuade our hearts before him, 20 because if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. 21 Beloved, if our hearts don’t condemn us, we have boldness toward God;

John has the same insight from his own perspective. If your heart condemns you, then we rely on the Gospel of Grace instead of our feelings. We do not own those feelings of failure. If we overcome, then our heart will not condemn us and we have confidence. In Christ we are in a win-win position. All we have to do is move forward from faith to faith. The more consistently we win in faith the easier it becomes. But if we stumble, we have to stop counting failures before they will diminish. In this process we will also stop counting the failures of others. The believer will get more and more humble with each victory because he or she will understand more and more that it is God within him that is winning. He will not have to “work on his humility.”

Matthew 18:21-23 KJV Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

What does “seventy times seven” mean? Does it mean 490 times? It is biblically symbolic. Seven is the number of God’s perfection. Ten represents completeness or infinity. We should have

no limit on our forgiveness because God forgives us completely. The grace channel within us runs both ways, the more we give the more we are able to receive.

This biblical strategy from Paul and John is guaranteed to work because it is the Transforming Power of Grace.