Servants' NEWS

Vol. 8, No. 6 *A newsletter for servants of the Almighty Eternal Creator, wherever they may be* **Nov/Dec 2002**

Story of Grace

by Delmar Leger

Allow me to tell you a story. We can start this story in the winter of 1935. The nation was in the throes of the great depression. It's hard for us to imagine in today's affluent society just how desperate those days were. Well do I remember, as a child, people knocking on our back door begging for food. Mom would always feed them. Long lines of hungry people were standing in front of soup kitchens waiting for something to eat. Jobs were virtually non-existent, and money was as precious as it was scarce.

There was a man by the name of Fiorello LaGuardia who was the mayor of New York City during those dark days. LaGuardia seemed to have a genuine heartfelt love for the common man, especially the downtrodden. One time, during a newspaper strike, he spent his Sunday mornings reading the funny papers over the radio—and with all the appropriate inflections. Why? He didn't want the children of New York to be deprived of that little bit of enjoyment. He was well known for his blustery outbursts against the "bums" that exploited the poor. He was completely unpredictable and full of surprises.

One night he showed up at a night court in one of the poorest wards of the city. That's where this phase of our story begins. He dismissed the presiding judge for the evening and sent him home to his family. Then the mayor himself took over the bench.

On that bitterly cold night, a tattered old woman stood before the bench accused of stealing a loaf of bread. You must understand, those were desperate times. A lot of people were going hungry.

With quivering lips and tear filled eyes, she admitted to the theft. But, she added, "my daughter's husband has deserted her, she is sick, and her children are crying because they have nothing to eat."

The shopkeeper, however, refused to drop the charges. "It's a bad neighborhood your honor, she's guilty," he shouted. "The law must be upheld, she's got to be punished to teach other people a lesson." LaGuardia knew that her accuser was right. The very office that he swore to uphold required that he enforce the letter of the law.

LaGuardia sighed. He turned to the old women and said, "I've got to punish you; the law makes no exceptions. He then pronounced the sentence. The old woman shuddered when she heard the words "Ten dollars or ten days in jail." But already the judge was reaching into his pocket. He pulled out a ten-dollar bill and threw it into his hat. "Here's the ten-dollar fine, which I now remit. Furthermore, I'm fining everyone in this courtroom fifty cents, for living in a town where a person

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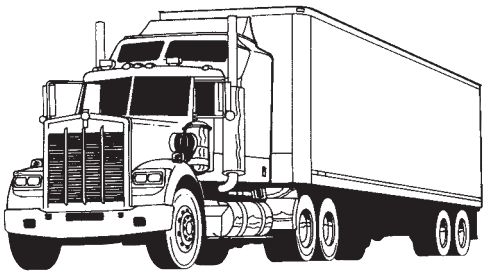
Truckers Bible Study



Oak Grove, Mo.
#110-113

The Trucker's Bible Study is conducted weekly at the Texaco truck stop on I-70, Oak Grove, Missouri, by Arlo Gieselman, often assisted by Lenny Cacchio, the writer of this series.

October 6, 2002

We had five guests today. I began with the passage in Ezekiel 22, where God says He looked for someone to stand in the gap, but found none. In a way that's an indictment of us, for we should in fact be willing to step forward and stand in the gap ourselves. I asked the question: have we come to the point where there is no longer anyone to stand in the gap? One of the drivers pointed out that Elijah thought he was all alone, but in fact there were still 7,000 who had not bent the knee to Baal.

It is easy to get on a negative track in these studies when subjects such as this are broached. We all know about the evils of our society, but the fact is people come to these studies to be uplifted rather than to grouse. So I took the approach of asking what specifically can we do as individuals to stand in the gap. Too often we will hear generalities such as "preach the gospel", "do the work", "stand in the gap", but we are not given the tools nor the ideas on how to do these things.

I turned to Nehemiah. In Ezekiel the reference to building the wall and standing in the gap has to do with repairing the walls that protect our society. In Nehemiah it was a literal wall that needed to be repaired. First, Nehemiah prayed. Then he enlisted the help of others.

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Trucking Job for Sabbath-Keepers?

The Sept/Oct 2002 Servants' News (page 25) asked if anyone knew of a Sabbath-observing trucking company. One such company is:

McKee Baking
555 McKee Dr
PO Box 39
Gentry, AR 72734
Tel: 479-736-2601

They make "Little Debbie" snack cakes. My daughter worked there a couple years back and they were definitely a Sabbath-keeping organization. They use a lot of truck drivers. Hope this will help someone.

— James A. Rich

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Servants' NEWS

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The purpose of Church Bible Teaching Ministry is to continue the work of the Church that was started by Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) and His Apostles in the first century. This work involves expounding the truth of the Bible by means of preaching, teaching, writing and music as well as taking positive action to help and serve other believers and all people of the world. CBTM and those people who work within it are just a few of many parts of the Church, which is the body of Christ. *Servants' News* is a publication of CBTM.

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News from Local Congregations

This column includes information sent to us from a variety of groups. Servants' News does not necessarily agree with the teachings or practices of these groups. Please ask about them before attending their functions.

Wisconsin Spring Feast

Everyone is invited to any or all of the Berean Fellowship Spring Feast in Dousman (near Milwaukee), Wisconsin. The schedule is as follows:

Tuesday, April 15
- Passover services

Wednesday, April 16
- Passover services/meals
- Night to be Much Observed meals

Thursday, April 17
- 2:00 p.m. service at the Dousman Municipal Building
- Potluck meal following?

Friday, April 18
- 6:30 p.m. potluck meal at the Dousman Municipal Building
- 7:30 p.m. Bible study: *Bible Teaching on War* by **Norman Edwards**

Saturday, April 19
- 2:00 p.m. service: *Meaning of the Last Day of Unleavened Bread* by **Norman Edwards**
- Potluck meal following
- 2nd annual 'Barn Mitzvah'—party, dance & variety show in the Geiger barn

Sunday, April 20
- 2:00 p.m. wave sheaf Bible study at Hagen's

Monday, April 21
- 7:00 p.m. Bible study at Wale's
- Snacks, no meal

Tuesday, April 22
- 7:00 p.m. Bible study at Roth's
- snacks, no meal

Wednesday, April 23
- 2:00 p.m. service—Dousman Municipal Building
- Potluck meal following

For directions and information, contact Hal and Scarlet Geiger, N5396 Hwy P, Helenville, Wi 53137; 262-593-5637 or 262-549-2652; hal.geiger@waukeshaengine.dresser.com

Sabbatarians Fight for Life

Forty-two million babies have been murdered through abortion since 1973. America's holocaust is currently seven times larger than Nazi Germany's. The methods by which these children are murdered are both gruesome and disturbing. A picture of an aborted child will speak for itself. Most are torn apart by powerful suction or dismembered by sharp knives. The Bible makes it clear that the unborn are human beings (Ps 139:13–14; Job 31:15; Jer 1:5; Luke 1:44) and as Christians we have the responsibility to help those in need (Matt. 25:31–46). Who could be more in need than these helpless, voiceless, and innocent children?

There are many things one can do to help end this holocaust within our land. And that is why I am writing this, to let you know of the Christian's responsibility to these children. Thousands of babies continue to die daily as a constant reminder of the lack of soldiers standing up for and fighting for their lives. I am letting you know of an organization which has put together a free package of information and resources for those wanting to begin in this outreach. They are non-profit, all-volunteer, and they sell absolutely nothing. Their address is: Baysis of Life, P.O. Box 106, Lapaz, Ind. 46537. If you truly want to begin in this outreach, simply write them and request their "free anti-abortion action pack".

Please take this matter to prayer and share this need with other Christians. Read Proverbs 24:11–12 and Matthew 25:40. May God (YHWH) bless you in all you do! If you have any questions e-mail me at indianadd@yahoo.com (note that it may take me a while to respond though).

Thank you for your time,

— Ryan Smith
fellow Sabbath-keeping Christian

Book Refutes Jewish Views of Jesus

Are the Jewish arguments against Christianity any good? Is Jesus Christ the promised Messiah? Were early Christian doctrines derived from paganism? Is the New Testament historically reliable? Was Jesus God?

The new book, ***A Zeal For God Not According to Knowledge*** (iUniverse, Inc., 715 pp.), refutes all standard Jewish arguments against Christianity. This book specifically replies against such critics of Christianity as Samuel Levine, Michael Drazin, Tovia Singer, and Hyam Maccoby. All those influenced by the reasoning of Darrell Conder, formerly of Commonwealth Publishing, should read this book. It includes a comprehensive table of contents, the careful citation of sources through footnotes, a standard bibliography, and a very basic index. The author has an M.A. and B.A. in history, and a B.A. in philosophy, which helps to ensure quality scholarship and careful writing.

When using credit cards, order from the iUniverse.com Web site for $37.95 (soft cover) or $47.95 (hard cover) plus approximately $5.68 for shipping and handling. When using checks or money orders ($40 for the soft cover, $50 for the hard cover, shipping included), order from: Eric V. Snow, at 20 Oak Hollow, Suite 260, Southfield, MI 48393.

— Eric Snow

Long Island Church of God Fellowship

A previous article on this group (SN May/June 2001, p. 5) was over-summarized and contained some errors. This article is much better and more accurately describes this interesting study group.

The Long Island COG Fellowship has been meeting since the early nineties. Most of the 10–14 people attending have no previous Church of God background. Yet, they have been observing the Sabbath and Holy days faithfully now, for sometime, as well as learning other new Bible truths. In fact, a couple of members are currently being counseled for baptism (two of the hosts of the group, baptized one of the members a few years back).

Two of the three current hosts of the group go back to the origins of the group, which started in 1993. (They had met at work and when they both discovered each were subscribers to the *Plain Truth* magazine, they began to study together.) They are Nick Viola and Cathy DeLyra.

In 1997, the group added a third host, named John Marmero, Jr., and this has been the core of the group ever since. John and Nick also both share a corporate/hierarchal Church of God background, having both been members of the WCG, GCG, and CGI respectively (John had also attended CGI's Imperial Academy back in the mid 90's, as well as worked for Ron Dart's CEM). After having gone through the inherent problems of corporate organizations and their stifling politics, they felt it was time they devote their full energies to the COGF and towards focusing on teaching and local evangelism (1Cor 12).

Nick Viola in the early stages of the group, faithfully taught Mrs. DeLyra and her family (including her daughter Louise) the many truths of the Bible as he understood them. Louise had been taking an interest in the studies, since she was 10 years old and now on the verge of her 21st birthday, she is currently counseling for baptism. When asked how the fellowship has been able to reach and attract so many people without a COG background, Nick replied that it was personal contacts and evangelism—"people reaching out to other people".

Back in the early 90's, Nick and John were also involved in the beginnings of what would eventually evolve into a local congregation of Rod Meredith's Global Church of God. This small group had been meeting in a former WCG member's home, in Babylon, NY, and had been exclusively showing GCG videos each Sabbath, beginning in August 1993.

Nick, while being involved with these two groups (LICOGF & GCG) was also busy at the time, with a third study group, which he helped organize at a local college. Nick had asked Rod Meredith at the time whether he could send out a GCG representative to meet with this college group (as well as the GCG video group in Babylon).

Dave Pack was the minister assigned to come for the visit and he did visit with the GCG group, but not with the college group. He discussed with Nick his feelings on the college group and it was clear that neither the independent study format at the college, nor the T-shirt and jeans Nick wore at the time (Nick had been having financial difficulties at the time) fitted the GCG's image. Dave Pack told Nick that it was best if he quit the local evangelism he had been doing at the time (which involved about 32 members who attended the college group) and that he should disband the group and tell them that he (Nick) had no authority to preach, because he had no authority or credentials from Global to do so.

[I was working for the GCG headquarters at this time and remember hearing about this from the office—I thought it was sad that the GCG could not work with Nick Viola, but I had no idea that the group broke up. — NSE]

Before leaving to fly home, Dave Pack hugged Nick and told him to just hand out GCG literature to the college group and have them send their tithes and offerings to the GCG headquarters. After having been built from the ground up through Nick and then having been rejected by Global, the group became disheartened, and Nick says they gradually dispersed. The irony of all this is that Rod Meredith instructed Dave Pack to directly meet with this college study group, but instead, Pack took it upon himself to judge the group according to Nick's appearance and never met with them.

Comment: This writer recalls Ron Dart of Christian Educational Ministries mentioning several times, that even though the WCG spent hundreds of millions of dollars on TV, radio and advertising, nevertheless about one half of new members came as a result of personal evangelism, a member bringing someone else into the church.

The Long Island Fellowship study is completely interactive, anyone is free to speak on a pre-determined broad subject. The members feel very strongly that "iron does sharpen iron". The group also believes in testimonies and prayer requests from its members, showing that we are living epistles of Christ and that much of biblical Christianity is "showing by example". Nick also mentioned that he feels it is important to establish in prospective members, why God is there, before getting into a lot of "do's and don'ts".

Their meetings start with group prayer (and this includes women praying as well). The group feels that this is an important and especially rewarding part of their study. The group prayers can sometimes last as long as 15 minutes and it brings a welcome feeling of peace to start the meeting.

The fellowship is currently working on the finances to develop and support its own website. It also has plans to advertise Tom Justus' old WCG booklets (these are no longer under copyright and hence available for any group to use) in local papers and circulars on Long Island, e.g. *The Pennysaver*.

Visitors (space permitting) are welcome and Nick has stated he is open to visiting people in their homes, or public places, if they so choose. He even said he would be willing to travel as far away as 200 miles, if someone requested it.

The LICOGF can be contacted via e-mail: lichurchofgodfellowship@juno.com or by writing: LICOGF, P.O. Box 396, N. Massapequa, NY 11758-0396.

— John Marmero, Jr

Sabbatarian Young People: What Is Their Future?

Christian parents hope that their children will come to love and follow God—and attend the same kind of congregation that they do. But a large percentage of Church of God young people do not follow their parents' beliefs. This problem has existed throughout the history of the large corporate groups, and it exists in the small independent groups now. While parents are studying the fine points of various doctrines (God's nature, calendars, etc.), they are sometimes shocked to find their young people have totally rejected their congregation's teaching, the Sabbath, the Bible or even God Himself.

The reasons for this are complex and varied. But in this single page, we will discuss the most important ones and make suggestions whereby parents may live at peace with their young people, and help them to follow God.

See How God Works with Us

Have you ever realized that the way God works with people is much different than the way parents usually work with their children? While little children certainly need to be told what is right to do and have obedience enforced, how many parents fully grasp that the teen years are a time to give up control and to let their teens make decisions? Yes, they will inevitably make some mistakes. Parents need to try to simply prevent their older teens from major disasters—they should not try to prevent them from all sin.

Does that sound radical? The Bible and history show that God does not give all truth to every person—or even every Christian. The churches in Revelation 2 and 3 had different problems, but Christ worked with them all. But He did not jump in and stop them from each sin. He observed how they behaved, He showed them what was wrong, and He commanded them to repent. Most mature Christians realize that it took many years for them to recognize and overcome some of their sins—and that they still are not finished. We should not expect our children to be much different—nor should we cut off communication with them because they have some sin. God does not cut off communication with us when we sin.

Why Young People Leave

Young people often leave their congregations because parents expect more out of their young people than they expect out of themselves. Sabbatarian groups place great emphasis on commanding obedience to law and so Sabbatarian parents command their children to obey law. But "doing" the laws is a much better teacher than commanding them (Rom 2:13; Jms 1:25).

Major reasons why young people leave their church group include:

Parental hypocrisy. Parents hold their children to higher standards of Sabbath-keeping, cleanliness, cheerfulness, etc. than they personally practice.

Church hypocrisy. Church leaders preach a higher standard than they personally follow. Church headquarters are much more tolerant of minister's sins than the ministers are of member's sins.

Lack of fruit. Young people may hear many good doctrinal sermons, but find their church group lacking in love and lacking the positive works that Jesus said His followers would have. Indeed, some Sabbatarian groups come across as extremely self-righteous: "we are better than the others".

Situation impossibility and/or lack of faith. This problem is part the fault of parents and part the fault of young people. The "fault percentage" varies—only God knows. Many parents have simply not thought out what they really expect their children to do with their lives or whether their goals for their children are even possible to achieve. On the other hand, some parents present very realistic alternatives. Young people, of course, vary greatly also. Some have the faith to live up to the most difficult of Biblical, church and parental requirements, others do not believe God will see them through comparatively easy situations.

Making It Possible

Young people typically have the following questions about their future?

What is my relationship to God?
Where am I going to school/work?
Where am I going to live?
Who am I going to marry?

Parents need to realize that becoming a Christian is more than just baptism and attending the same church. Young people must be serious enough to dedicate their lives to living God's way—they may learn a few things "the hard way" before seeing the value of God's way.

Parents often forget what a struggle they had with their job when they began to keep the Sabbath. In general, jobs are harder for young people to get than they were 30 years ago, and first jobs for Sabbath keepers are even more difficult.

"Who will I marry?" is often greatly underestimated by Sabbatarian parents. Thirty years ago, there were Ambassador Colleges, huge Feast sites and big church meetings. A young person had many chances to find somebody they liked and who was "in the church". **Today, with many small groups, some young people may no know <u>even</u> <u>one</u> person whom their parents would accept as a spouse—not to mention somebody whom they love.**

The practice of most CoGs of inviting all Sabbatarian singles to their singles outings is a good start. Hopefully, parents have the wisdom to let their young people attend. Unfortunately, if a cross-CoG dating relationship ends in a marriage, the young people will still find that most church organizations will not let them freely attend both husband's and wife's groups on a regular basis. (See articles on "Hierarchical Leader Letter" in the six *Servants' News* issues from Sept/Oct 2001 to July/August 2002.) If they are to ever have any position of responsibility, they must attend primarily one group and forsake the side of the family in the other. **The church organizations must solve this problem by allowing members to attend similar groups.**

Parents Must Rethink

Rather than think "how much they can demand of their children", parents need to think about what their children can do, ask that they follow the basics of Christianity, and hope they will desire to do more. This is much better than parents forcing older teens to "do everything right", then seeing them leave home early, or depart from God completely. Parents must remember that they learned truth as their life went on—so will their children. The article following this issue, *Love That Lasts*, is a good example of the basic information that teens and their parents should know.

— Norman Edwards

What Is the Meaning of Grace?

By Loyd Hohertz

Grace is one of the most fundamental words of Christianity. It is a word used on a regular basis by Christians, but do most Christians have a clear and complete understanding of what "grace" means? Any diligent student studying a subject in college would not remotely expect to thoroughly understand that subject without a proper understanding of the fundamental words of the subject. Are we to **expect** a Christian to be less diligent in understanding the fundamental words of Christianity?

The only definition of grace I had ever heard given by the Worldwide Church of God from my years at Ambassador College from 1958 to 1962 and until Herbert Armstrong's death in 1986, was "unmerited pardon". (Almost all of the present and former members of Worldwide Church of God I have discussed the meaning of **grace** with, still define **grace** as "unmerited pardon".) I was never comfortable with this definition.

Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary, second edition, in defining "pardon" as a noun, lists the word "forgiveness" as the **only** synonym. "Unmerited" is listed without a definition, along with hundreds of other words with the prefix of **un**. The prefix **un** is defined as: not, lack of, the opposite of. However, the word "merited" is listed separately and is defined by the single word "deserved". So, "unmerited" obviously would have to mean "undeserved". Then "unmerited pardon" would obviously mean "undeserved forgiveness". Is this a proper definition of grace?

During my college years, I noticed that the Apostle Paul ended all of his letters with the following or similar expression; "The **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you." (The word "grace" found in the New Testament is always translated from the Greek word *karis* designated by *Strong's Concordance*, reference #5485.) Does it make sense for Paul to be continually saying to converted Christians, "May the 'unmerited pardon' of Christ be with you"? There are many benefits available to Christians from Christ! Why would Paul consistently express the same desire that Christians be blessed with only one of the many benefits available to them from Christ?

It was not until late 1993 that I made a major study of the meaning of all the major fundamental words in the Bible, including **grace**. This study revealed that **grace** has a far greater scope of meaning than just "unmerited pardon".

Divine Grace in Scriptures

A good scripture that translates the Greek word *karis* as **favor** instead of grace is found in Luke 1:30. This scripture tells about Mary, the woman that was to become the mother of Christ; "Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found **favor** with God.' " Does the definition of **grace** as "unmerited pardon" explain the honor Mary received by being chosen of God to become the mother of Christ? Luke 2:40 tells of the young Jesus: "And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the **grace** of God was upon Him." 2 Corinthians tells us that Christ never sinned. Since Christ did not sin, why would God's "unmerited pardon" be upon Him? And how would "unmerited pardon" cause Jesus to grow strong in spirit?

John 1:14 gives the following description of Christ; "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of **grace** and **truth**". John 1:17 further states; "For the law was given by Moses, but **grace** and **truth** came through Jesus Christ." Christ who was full of grace and truth, fully demonstrated this grace and truth in how He lived and in everything He taught and in everything He did. John 17:17 records Christ's definition of **truth** as He is praying to God the Father; "Sanctify them by Your **truth**. Your word is **truth**." Since **truth** is defined with such a wide scope of meaning as encompassing all of God's word, should we not expect **grace**, which is mentioned first and directly associated with **truth** to have a far more powerful meaning than "unmerited pardon"? Let's review some additional scriptures for a more complete definition of **grace**.

> But grow in **grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2Pet 3:18)

How does a person grow in "unmerited pardon"? And is "unmerited pardon" the only thing besides knowledge that Christ has to offer for Christians to grow in?

> ...of which I became a minister according to the **gift of the grace** of God given to me by the effective working of His power (Eph 3:7).

Would "unmerited pardon" alone demonstrate the effectual working of God's power and make the Apostle Paul a powerful minister?

Romans 12:6 to 21 lists the gifts and attributes granted Christians by the **grace** of God given to them: "Having then gifts differing according to the **grace** that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith." The rest of this chapter lists over 20 gifts granted to Christians by God's **grace**! Ephesians 4:7–16 also lists several of these gifts of grace. These gifts of grace include not only offices of authority, but all of the character traits of God. **None** of the gifts of **grace** listed in these two chapters have the exclusive meaning of "unmerited pardon".

> Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us **everlasting consola-**

tion and good hope through grace (2Thes 2:16).

The hope of all Christians culminates in the main and final hope which in the resurrection and eternal life (Acts 2:25–27; 3:6; 24:15; 26:6; Rom 8:21–22; 1Thes 2:19; 5:8; Titus 1:2; 2:13; 3:7; Heb 3:6; 6:11; 1Pet 1:3–4; 1Jn 3:1–3). Clearly, providing everlasting consolation and good hope encompasses far more than "unmerited pardon".

> And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work (2Cor 9:8).

This scripture clearly states that God's **grace** is available to supply **all our needs** and to help us do every good work. Also, at the very least, this scripture also **strongly implies** that every good work is grace.

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the **grace** that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1Pet 1:13).

This scripture tells us that we are to look forward in hope to the gift of **grace** we shall receive at the return of Christ. What else is this but the resurrection of true Christians?!

Peter speaks of Christian husbands and their wives: "…being heirs together of the **grace of life**" (1Pet 3:7). The Bible tells us that what true Christian heirs should expect to inherit is **eternal life**! (Matt 19:29; 10:17; Luke 10:25; 18:18.) Does "unmerited pardon" of itself grant us eternal life?

> But may the **God of all grace**, who called us to His **eternal glory** by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, **perfect**, establish, strengthen, and settle you (1Pet 5:10)
>
> …so that as sin reigned in death, even so **grace** might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 5:21).

How can "unmerited pardon" by itself perfect a Christian's character and personality and establish God's eternal glory in him? Does **grace** as defined by the term "unmerited pardon" reign over all aspects of a Christian's life unto eternal life?

Acts 15:11 states: "But we believe that through the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." Also in Titus 2:11 we read: "For the **grace** of God **that brings salvation** has appeared to all men." "Unmerited pardon" involves only one of many facets of the salvation-giving power of the life of Christ. "Unmerited pardon" **of itself** saves **absolutely no one**!

Some of the most powerful and definitive scriptures on grace are found in Ephesians:

> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the **gift of God**, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for **good** works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Eph 2:8–10).

These scriptures plainly state that we are not saved by our works but by God's workmanship through Christ, which is Their works of **grace**. Are we to believe that God and Christ's workmanship in regards to true Christians only involves "unmerited pardon"?

> …receiving the end of your faith—the **salvation of your souls**. Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the **grace** that would come to you (1Pet 1:9–10)

Was "unmerited pardon" what the prophets were diligently searching and prophesying about? Is "unmerited pardon" the ultimate result that a Christian expects from his faith? These verses clearly and unmistakably state that the final product of God and Christ's **grace** is the **completed** process of salvation, the resurrection to eternal life.

In Acts 20:24 the apostle Paul uses the term "the gospel of the **grace** of God". In the next verse he connects this gospel with "preaching the kingdom of God". Acts 20:24 has a companion scripture:

> I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the **grace of Christ**, to a **different gospel**, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the **gospel of Christ** (Gal 1:6–7).

Notice that the **grace of Christ** is directly equated to the **gospel of Christ**.

In over two dozen New Testament scriptures the word "gospel" is used without any other description. In other places it is described as the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of God. There are several less common descriptions of the gospel, including "the everlasting gospel" as recorded in Revelation 14:6. Hebrews 4:2 states: "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them [Old Testament Israelites]…". These scriptures declare that the gospel of the Old and New Testaments is the same and is an everlasting gospel. It has always existed and will be around as long as God exists. Ephesians 1:13 describes the gospel in yet another manner; "the word of truth, gospel of your salvation". Regardless of how the "gospel" is described, it is timeless, it involves all of God's perfect word of truth and all aspects of salvation which is fully implemented, nurtured, and brought to full fruition by God and Christ's **grace**.

Characteristics of Grace

Grace is a free will gift, not something that is coerced (Matt 10:8).

Grace **always** remains within the parameters of God's law.

God's grace always expresses love (John 3:16, Heb 2:9).

God's Grace demonstrates His truth (John 1:17).

God's grace encourages and empowers a true Christian to do **righteous works of grace** (2Cor 9:8).

God's grace promotes abundant living (John 10:10).

Thanks and praise, whether given to God or man, is a form of grace (Heb 13:15).

Sometimes the blessings of grace are obvious, at other times they are extremely hard to comprehend.

Sometimes the blessings of grace are received immediately; at other times they are a long time in coming.

God's grace establishes His righteous character in true Christians.

Gods and Christ's grace provide for all aspects of salvation (Eph 2:8–10).

Now let us review one more set of scriptures concerning grace. There are several poignant scriptures concerning Christ that are intimately and powerfully connected to the function of grace. Here are two:

> ...who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, **with vehement cries and tears** to Him who was able to **save** Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He **suffered**. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb 5:7–9)

> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come **boldly** to the **throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy and find **grace** to help in time of need (Heb 4:15–16).

Let us review the office Christ holds at the present time. 1 Peter 1:20 states that Christ was foreordained to be our Savior before the foundation of the world. Christ, as a spirit being, was trained in heaven directly and intimately by God the Father in all the requirements of living like God. Christ explains this training:

> Then Jesus said to them, "...I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things..." (John 8:28).

> ...the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner (John 5:19).

> I speak what I have seen with My Father... (John 8:38).

Christ, after His divine training, humbled Himself and as a human being went through an intensive and extensive training process, overcoming all manner of temptations, being perfected by His **severe** sufferings. He is now a perfect High Priest, a perfect Mediator and a perfect Author of our salvation and sits in intimate and constant contact at the right hand of God the Father at the **throne of grace**. This scripture expresses the power of the **throne of grace**:

> Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and **greater** works than these he will do, because I go to My Father (John 14:12).

The scriptures we have reviewed so far on grace even when assessed on an individual basis, show that grace involves far more than "unmerited pardon". These same scriptures collectively profoundly state that God's grace is **intimately** and **constantly** and **powerfully** involved in **all facets** of salvation, including establishing His righteous character in those He has chosen.

Christians and Grace

Some people think of grace only as something that God and Christ give and Christians receive. Are Christians expected to be only on the receiving end of grace, or are they also expected or even required to show grace? Let us review what the scriptures say on this subject.

Besides grace and favor, the Greek word *karis* is also sometimes translated as thank, thanks, or thankworthy, as well as liberality, gift, benefit, pleasure, joy, and acceptable. **None** of these English words translated from the Greek word *karis* **remotely** have the exclusive meaning of "unmerited pardon".

Let us now review the word "**thank**" and its derivatives translated from the Greek word *karis*. In 1 Timothy 1:12 the Apostle Paul says: "and I **thank** Christ Jesus, the Lord…" In 2 Timothy 1:3 the Apostle Paul also states: "I **thank** God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers…" The Scriptures also speak of giving thanks to God or Christ (Rom 6:17; 1Cor 15:57; 2Cor 2:14; 2Cor 8:16; 9:15; 1Tim 1:12; 2Tim 1:3). Other scriptures speak of giving thanks to or receiving thanks from our fellow mankind (Luke 6:32, 33, 34; 17:9; 1Pet 2:19).

In parts of this country, even today, the expression "say grace" is still used for saying a prayer or giving **thanks** before a meal. Hebrews 13:15 gives the explanation of how proper prayer to God constitutes "saying grace": "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name." Proper prayer of thanksgiving and/or praise is one aspect of grace and is a freewill offering to God and/or Christ. It is interesting to note that even today the Spanish word *gracias*, meaning *grace*, is the common word used to express thanks in Spanish.

Let us read several scriptures showing that Christians are responsible for grace:

> Let your speech always be with **grace**, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one (Col 4:6).

> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with **grace** in your hearts to the Lord (Col 3:16).

What Grace Is Not

Grace is never something given out of fear.

Grace is not a license to sin. The Apostle Paul makes this statement in Romans 6:1-2: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

Grace is not a license to vegetate by believing that all that is necessary is to have faith in Christ and let Him do all the work. In Philippians 2:12 the Apostle Paul writing to converted Christians says: "…work out **your own** salvation with **fear** and **trembling**." Christ also tells us in Luke 13:24: "**Strive** to enter through the narrow gate…"

Grace is not selfish, but is given without expecting something in return. Christ's instruction on this matter is found in Matthew 6:2: "Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward."

The granting of God or Christ's grace to an individual is not a guarantee that an individual will be in the first resurrection and the kingdom of God. Hebrews 12:15 gives this instruction (which is in part quoted from Deuteronomy 29:18): "Looking carefully lest anyone **fall short of the grace of God**; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may **impart grace** to the hearers (Eph 4:29).

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, **let us have grace**, by which we may **serve** God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb 12:28).

But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this **grace** also (2Cor 8:7).

A close scrutiny of the last scripture and its surrounding verses will show that proper demonstration of faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love are expressions of grace.

Another different concept of **grace** is found here:

And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters them will I send to bring your **liberality** unto Jerusalem (1Cor 16:3, KJV).

The word "liberality" is translated from the Greek word *karis*, and is translated as "gift" in other Bible versions. The apostle Paul was instructing the Christians in Corinth to set aside physical goods that were to be taken to the poor Christians in Jerusalem. This free will offering of physical goods is called *karis* in Greek and is an example of **grace**.

So we urged Titus, since he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part (2Cor 8:6).

This scripture is saying that the teaching, preaching, and ministering of Titus were a form of grace.

God's and Christ's grace demonstrates their righteous character while directing and empowering true Christians to grow in that same righteous character. Gods and Christ's grace is empowered by their spirit and is the guiding force in implementing God's truth and character, as well as all of the functions which bring about complete salvation.

In regards to man giving grace, grace is a free will gift given for an unselfish, righteous purpose; whether to God or fellow mankind. Grace can be given in the form of physical goods, physical service, verbal expressions of kindness, spiritual service (healing, casting out demons, inspired preaching and teaching) or any demonstration or expression of Godly character.

Who Will Receive God's Grace?

God gives grace to the humble (1Pet 5:10).

God gives grace to those that walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11).

God rewards those that diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6). God rewards by giving His gift of grace.

God gives grace to those that give grace (Matt 6:4).

God gives grace to those who obey Him: "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey** Him" (Heb 5:9). Titus 2:11 and other scriptures show that salvation comes about because of God's and Christ's grace.

God will give extra grace to the person who makes full use of the grace he has already received.

Old Testament Grace

Some people think **grace** is only a New Testament phenomenon. Is there *any* proof that **grace** was involved in the Old Testament?

The Greek word *karis* (*Strong's* #5485) which is most often translated "grace", is also translated "favor" in the following scriptures: Luke 1:30, 2:52, Acts 2:47, 7:10, and 7:46. Acts 7:9–10 gives a good example of grace in the Old Testament; "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him **favor** [*karis* #5485] and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house." The original story is found in Genesis 41:40–44.

Acts 7:45–46 relates another powerful Old Testament example of grace:

Which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David, who found favor [karis #5485] before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob (Acts 7:45–46)

The original story is found in 2 Samuel 7:8–16. In these verses God tells David that He took him from herding sheep and made him king of Israel. In verse 16 God tells David: "And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." Here we have two major examples of grace from the Old Testament which are **confirmed** in the New Testament.

There are many other examples of God's grace in the Old Testament. The first use of the word "grace" in the Old Testament is found in Genesis 6:8, "But Noah found grace [*ghehn*, #2580] in the eyes of the LORD." Because of this grace, Noah and his family were not destroyed in the flood.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews has a long list of faithful people from the Old Testament.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, **did not receive the promise**, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us (Heb 11:39–40).

Since these people are dead and have not yet received the promise, it is obvious that they will not receive the **promise** until after they are resurrected. Titus 1:2 declares what this promise is: "in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began." Earlier in this article we reviewed several scriptures that clearly state that the resurrection is the end product of salvation and that it only can be obtained with God's grace. Thus all the people listed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews had and will have the benefit of God's grace.

Perhaps the most beautiful description of grace in the entire Bible is found in the Old Testament:

For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give **grace** [*Strong's* #2580] and glory; **no good thing** will He withhold from those who walk **uprightly** (Psalm 84:11)

Old Testament Grace Versus New Testament Grace

There is a major difference between the application of God's **grace** in the Old Testament and its application in the present age. The establishment of the New Covenant after

the resurrection and shortly after Christ's ascension into heaven required a special application of God's grace. Jeremiah 31:31–40 and Hebrews 8:8–12 describe this **New Covenant**: "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Jeremiah 31:33).

The foundation of the Old Testament covenant was established when God gave His laws to the Israelites on Mount Sinai and established Israel as a special nation to God (also called the congregation). This major event was a very special expression of God's **grace** towards Israel (Ex 20:1–17).

The New Testament covenant was ushered in with God giving His Spirit to approximately 3,000 people at the same time on Pentecost which established the New Testament Church (Acts 2:1–4). Ever since this event, God's spirit of grace has been available to true Christians in a more powerful, sophisticated, perfect and personal manner. True Christians, under the New Covenant, have available to them, not only all of the attributes of God the Father, but everything Christ learned from His perfected human experiences.

Reference Book Definition of Grace

Now that we have thoroughly reviewed the meaning of grace from the Bible, how do these definitions compare to the definitions found in major reference books?

Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary, second edition, has the following definitions of **grace**:

- the free unmerited love and favor of God
- divine influence acting in man to restrain him from sin
- spiritual instructions, improvement and edification

There are also several English words that are based on the same Latin root word as grace. These relatively common English words help to further illustrate the meaning of grace. Five of these words are grateful, gratify, gratis, gratuity and gratitude.

Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament has these definitions of the Greek word *karis* (*Strong's* #5485) which is most often translated as "grace" in the New Testament:

- to grant forgiveness, to pardon
- good-will, loving, kindness, favor
- the idea of kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved
- the merciful kindness by which God, exerting His holy influence upon souls, turns them to Christ, keeps, strengthens, increases them in Christian faith, knowledge, affection, and kindles them to the exercise of Christian Virtues
- sustaining and aiding the efforts of the men who labor for the cause of Christ
- the **salvation** offered to Christians is called *karis* in Greek, a gift of divine grace (1Pet 1:10–13)
- the aggregate of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians
- the gifts of knowledge and utterance conferred upon Christians.

Other Aspects of Grace

Many, if not most, Christians think of grace as being "unmerited" and exclusively dealing with the negative nature of man such as forgiving sins. This is the concept that "unmerited pardon" strongly, if not exclusively, conveys. Is this concept a provable fact, or just a conclusion that people have reached without any serious investigation?

John 1:14 tells us that Christ, while on this earth in human form, had God's grace in full measure. The Bible tells us that the human Christ carried out His responsibilities with perfection and without sinning. Was the grace that God granted Christ unmerited?

Earlier in this article it was shown that the Greek word *karis*, which most often is translated grace, is also translated *thanks* or one of its derivatives. There are scriptures that tell of giving thanks to mankind as well as to God. Would thanks given to God ever be unmerited? Would thanks even expressed to a fellow human normally be unmerited? What if God gives a person a special task, such as delivering a specific prophecy? If that person carries out this task to the best of his ability, is any help from God to carry out this task unmerited? Were all of the gifts of grace granted to Moses to carry out his duties unmerited? Were all of the gifts of grace granted to the 12 apostles to carry out God's service unmerited? The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells of many of God's faithful that are waiting for the resurrection. Even though the resurrection to eternal life is a gift from God, God requires strict standards to be met to qualify for the resurrection. So, strictly speaking, is the resurrection of the faithful "unmerited"? If so, then what do we call the situation where people will not be in the resurrection to eternal life because they have committed the unpardonable sin?

Earlier in this article we reviewed scriptures that show that expressing or demonstrating godly character is grace. This would include keeping the Ten Commandments. Is honoring God "unmerited" grace? Is honoring your father and mother "unmerited" grace?

Sometimes God's grace is obvious. Other times God's grace is very hard to recognize or very difficult to understand. Sometimes what appears to be grace can be deceptive and actually be a curse. Christians must remember that Satan can disguise himself as an angel of light and many of Satan's ministers present themselves as servants of light and present a false gospel of grace (Acts 20:24, 2Cor 11:14–15).

Sometimes the blessings of grace are observed immediately as demonstrated by the scriptures telling of Christ healing people, casting out demons or even raising up the dead in the case of Lazarus (John 11:43–44). Other times the blessings of grace are not realized until many years in the future.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews lists most of the characters of faith in the Bible. Verse 8 speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob being heirs of the promise. Verse 39 speaks

of all the people of faith listed in the chapter: "And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise." The main product of God's grace is salvation which culminates in the resurrection and a glorious spiritual body. All of those chosen by God, including those who are dead, are still waiting for this future gift of grace.

The Special Blessings of Gracious Curses!

Paradoxically, what may appear to be a curse from a human point of view may be God's grace at work. A good explanation of this concept is found in 1 Peter 4:12–13: "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial** which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you **partake of Christ's sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy."

The word "try" has a far broader meaning than some people realize. The word "try", as used in many Biblical examples, comes from a metallurgical term. It means to place the raw ore in a hot furnace and melt it down so the precious metals can be removed. That is what God and Christ are doing with true Christians. True Christians are figuratively "tried" in a fiery furnace so their evil and worthless nature will be removed so that only precious good character remains to be further developed. A good description of this concept is found in Zechariah 13:9.

An example of a fiery trial that was also an act of grace on God's part is the terrible experiences Job went through. The first chapter of Job tells us that he had seven sons and three daughters. Job 1:3 also states that he also had seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred she asses, and a **very** great household. The rest of chapter 1 tells how in a short period of a single day Job was informed that all his children had been killed and all his vast herds of different animals were either stolen or destroyed. It also appears that all his servants were killed except the ones left who individually brought news of each of the catastrophes. Later Job was stricken with boils from the bottom of his feet to the top of his head. Job 2:8–9 depicts Job sitting in ashes, apparently naked, while scraping his boils with a potsherd. His wife, instead of encouraging him, tells him to curse God and die. Job looked so terrible that when his three friends came to see him they sat on the ground with him for **seven days** and **seven nights** without speaking.

Then Job finally breaks the silence and begins to speak. Chapters 3 through 37 tells of Job defending himself while his "friends" accuse him of being a supreme hypocrite. It was their view that Job must be a superb hypocrite and not nearly as righteous as he appeared to be. Otherwise, why would God be allowing Job to be cursed in such a drastic manner?

After all of these terrible experiences were over with; we read in chapters 38, 39, 40 and 41 about Job receiving corrections from God, who speaks out of a whirlwind and challenges Job to compare himself to God. Then, Job states in Job 42:5–6; ""I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I **abhor** myself, and **repent** in dust and ashes." Job was a righteous man. God attests to this in Job 1:8; 2:3 Also in Job 42:7–8, God tells Job's three friends that "…you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has." The problem was that, in spite of Job being righteous, he had an imperfect concept of God which was hindering his spiritual growth. Job 42:10 states: "And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends…". The rest of the book of Job tells how God then blessed Job with seven sons and three daughters and **twice** the wealth in herds of animals that he had before. Job then lived another 140 years and saw his descendants to the fourth generation. God allowed **Satan** to **severely curse** Job and yet God used this experience to provide a gracious blessing. It is interesting to note that Satan tempts people to bring out the worst in their human nature. God tries people in order to bring out the best in their character.

Another example of a curse being an act of grace on God's part is the experience Joseph went through. He was sold into slavery by his brothers, falsely accused of rape by the wife of Potiphar, and kept in slavery for 13 years during the prime of his life. And yet this was an act of grace on God's part and prepared Joseph to be second in charge under Pharaoh over all of Egypt. In this position of authority God used Joseph to prepare for the seven years of famine that were to come, and provide for all of Egypt and the people in the surrounding countries. Joseph was also able to provide for his whole family during the famine and provide a place for them to live until their Exodus out of Egypt.

A great portion of the Bible is about the trials and triumphs of God's servants. The faith chapter of Hebrews 11 tells of many of the fiery trials that God's faithful servants went through. God's grace is not only demonstrated by obvious blessings, but also by trials which perform a necessary and vital function in salvation.

There are many scriptures that tell of Christ's fiery trials as a human on earth:

> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin (Heb 4:15).
>
> Though He [Christ] was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He **suffered** (Heb 5:8).
>
> And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44).

Hebrews 2:9 gives an **excellent** explanation of Christ's final trial as a human on the earth:

> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the **grace** of God, might **taste death** for everyone.

Galatians 3:13 also describes Christ's death: "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a **curse** for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')." The extreme sufferings or curses Christ experienced are **supreme** examples of God and Christ's grace. Not only did these trials and curses bring about forgiveness for mankind, it also was part of the perfecting of Christ's character so He could provide complete salvation as the perfect savior and mediator of the New Covenant between God and man (Heb 8:6).

> For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives (Heb 12:6).

God's elect are chosen to be trained for leadership in His kingdom. God does not call His elect to invite them to a picnic! God calls His elect for an intensive and extensive "boot camp training" because God is training them for leadership in His kingdom. Those being trained for the highest positions also go through the most intensive training and gracious curses in order to qualify for those positions. A true Christian's life is a bittersweet life. A Christian has many obvious blessings but there are also many severe trials. Even Christ, in spite of His perfect training directly under God in heaven and having a full measure of God's spirit while being a human being on earth, is described as; "A man of sorrow, and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3) The Apostle Paul, who wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else and was a powerful servant of God, states in 1 Corinthians 15:19; "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

From these clear and easy to understand scriptures, it can be confidently said that if your life has been one long picnic, you are either a good example of a Laodicean who's trials still lie ahead or you have never been called and chosen as one of the elect.

Fruits of a Graceless Society

A society void of grace can be best described as the "living dead". This type of society is physically alive but spiritually dead. The book of Jude tells us about this type of society. We read in Jude 4: "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, **ungodly men**, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice that people that pervert God's grace are called ungodly men. So, everything that is ungodly is the opposite of God's grace.

In verse 5 we are told how God destroyed the Israelites coming out of Egypt who believed not. This scripture shows that a person cannot properly utilize God's grace without faith. In verse 6 we are told that the angels who kept not their first estate, God has reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day. In verse 7 we are told about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their lack of grace. In verse 11 we are told about Cain, Balaam, and Korah as examples of ungodly (ungracious) men.

Titus 2:11–12 tells about God's grace and ungodliness: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **teaching** us that, **denying ungodliness** and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age."

God's grace is an expression of his character. God's grace empowers Christians to develop God's character and provides for their complete salvation. Grace is so important that God expects unconverted people to express grace. When a society gets to the stage where it is utterly void of grace, God is strongly inclined to destroy that society like He did at the time of the Noachian flood and at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is interesting to note that *Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary*, second edition, has the old, and now considered obsolete, definition of *ungracious*: **wicked**, **odious**, and **hateful**.

I believe that even the destruction of the world in the Noachian flood and the utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was an example of God's grace. In both cases the society had become so depraved that they had no redeeming value and they were rapidly racing down the path of miserable self-destruction. These people will all be resurrected in the future and will have a much better chance of developing good sound character. So God will turn a major curse into a blessing in the end.

I fully believe that everything God does demonstrates His **truth** and is **grace**. If this concept is correct, **truth** and **grace** represent everything God and Christ are!

Misuse of Grace

According to the Bible, the worst type of character a person can have is self-righteousness. Christ berated the religious leaders of His time more than anyone else because of their self-righteousness. Read the whole chapter of Matthew 23 for an example of this. In Matthew 21:31 Christ is speaking to the religious leaders and saying; "…Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you." Also in Matthew 5:20, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." There are many other scriptures that show that Christ had his worst problems with people who considered themselves very righteous.

Self-righteous people tend to be quick at seeing other people's faults, even small ones, while overlooking their own faults, even large ones. Christ's description of this problem is recorded in Matthew 7:3: "And why do you look at the **speck** in your brother's eye, but do not consider the **plank** in your own eye?" Self-righteous people also tend to make a big issue over small points of righteousness while overlooking large issues of righteousness. Matthew 23:24 records Christ describing this character trait of the scribes and Pharisees: "Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"

God hates self-righteousness because it is not only idolatry, but the worst form of idolatry. Self-righteousness is the worship of self! Because it involves the self, those involved with self-righteousness have a hard time fully comprehending their problem so they can start eliminating this negative character trait.

Satan is the supreme example of self-righteousness. It was also self-righteousness that Satan tempted Eve with at the tree of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 3:5 we find Satan telling Eve; "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Some examples of a self-righteous person are someone who denies the need for God's grace, misuses God's grace by exalting the self, or considers himself so righteous that God is obligated to grant him His grace. Self-righteous people also establish their own standard of righteousness instead of strictly relying and properly dividing God's word and utilizing His grace in directing and developing true righteousness. This is a terrible **insult** to God and Christ!

Does anyone expect God and Christ to give their gift of grace so someone can make and idol of himself?

The next major example of the misuse of God's grace is the lukewarm Christian. A person can thoroughly review the Bible from cover to cover and he will not find even **one** lukewarm hero. In Revelation 3:15–16 we find Christ statement about the Laodicean Church; "I know **your works**, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will **vomit** you out of My mouth." The Greek word *emco* (*Strong's* #1698, translated as "spue" in the King James Version) is translated correctly as "vomit". Christ is saying He cannot stomach a lukewarm Christian. Basically, Christ is stating that He would rather deal with a zealous enemy, like the Apostle Paul was before his conversion, than a lukewarm Christian.

I have been told many times by people that it was "interesting" to thoroughly understand the fundamental terms used in the Bible, but not important. I have also had people tell me they only concern themselves with the "basics" of the Bible and that they don't worry about the rest. I have had other people tell me that they learned a long time ago not to worry about things too much because they have faith that God and Christ know what they are doing and that they are fully competent to make sure that everything turns out all right. Would a person be this casual about a profession he was studying and hoping to excel in? Would it be logical for a person to expect to excel in a profession and not even understand the meaning of the fundamental words of that profession? Was it not important for Christ to thoroughly understand what He was suffering and dying for? Was it important for the apostles to know what they were communicating when they wrote the New Testament? Is it **possible** that it might be important that Christians have a thorough comprehension of what they read in the Bible?

God and Christ expect **more** from Christians than not being bad, and having a calm "faith" that God and Christ know what they are doing and will make sure everything turns out okay. There is an old saying that basically states: "All that is necessary for a minority of evil people to triumph is for a majority of 'good' people to sit idly by." God and Christ expect Christians to make thorough use of the divine grace they receive to diligently study to understand God's word and to abundantly produce righteous fruits. The amount of grace that a Christian will receive will directly be related to how well he uses the grace he has already received.

Deuteronomy gives this command to anyone who became king over Israel:

> Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, **that he shall write** for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to **observe all the words of this law and these statutes** (Deut 17:18–19)

Christians are called and chosen to be trained to be rulers including kings and priests in God's kingdom. With this understanding, should Christians be less diligent about God's word than the physical kings of ancient Israel and Judah? God, as part of the New Covenant, promises to put His laws into their minds and write them in their

Words Related to *Karis*

One of the ways to establish a better understanding of the meaning of a word is to review all of the related "family" of words. *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* is a good source for definitions of these words related to the Greek word *karis*.

The first related word we will review is *karizomai* (*Strong's* #5483). *Thayer's* has the following definitions for this word:

- to do a favor to, gratify
- to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent
- to grant forgiveness, to pardon
- to give graciously, give freely, bestow

Thayer's has these definitions for the second related word, *karisma* (#5486):

- the gift of divine grace
- the gift of faith, knowledge, holiness, virtue
- the sum of the powers requisite for the discharge of the office of an evangelist
- divine gift of extraordinary powers, distinguishing certain Christians and enabling them to serve the Church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace operating in the souls by the Holy Spirit

This Greek word is always found translated "gift" or "gifts" in the New Testament. The Greek word *karisma* is still in the English language, but it is spelled with **ch** instead of **k**.

Webster's New Twentieth Century Unabridged Dictionary, second edition, has the following definitions for **charisma**:

- a gift
- to favor, gratify, grace
- an extraordinary power as of working miracles or speaking many tongues, etc., said to be possessed by some of the early Christians

Thayer's has the following definitions for *karitoo* (Strong's #5487), which is the third word related to *karis*:

- to make graceful, i.e. charming, lovely, agreeable
- to pursue with grace, compass with favor, to honor with blessings

This Greek word is only found twice in the New Testament. The first use of the word is found in Luke 1:28, where the angel tells Mary she has been "highly favored" (*karitoo*, #5487) in being selected to be the mother of Jesus.

Most of the definitions of *karis* and the family of related words from *Thayer's* are also verified by scripture references. We now have a fuller understanding of the Greek word *karis*. In all cases, *karis* and its family of related words are connected to giving with the concept of **freely** and **kindness**.

hearts. But, a Christian is still responsible to do his part, including how fast, how complete, and how resolutely those laws become an intricate part of him. How well a Christian receives God's law along with his abilities will determine how he is rewarded in God's kingdom. A person can totally reject God's law, in which case he would be committing the unpardonable sin, and will not be in God's kingdom.

Christ was thoroughly, directly, and personally trained by God the Father. While He was a human being on this earth He had a full measure of God's grace upon Him. I think everyone would agree that Christ also had a thorough understanding of God's laws. Yet Hebrews 5:7–9 describes how He struggled to overcome sin and how He learned from the things He suffered. If Christ struggled that hard to perfectly and indelibly write God's law upon His heart and mind, should Christians expect less?

God's plan is, has been, and will continue to be to develop spiritual sons out of those He has chosen. God is not interested in super sophisticated spiritual robots. If God were interested in creating robots, He could have created them a long time ago with considerable less trouble for Himself as well as for mankind.

Apparently people want the benefits and blessings of being a free moral agent, but want the ease and comfort of being programmed like a robot. This is totally contrary to the example of Christ. This attitude is also contrary to all of the examples of the faithful in the Bible. It is totally contrary to the most basic concepts of the teaching of the Bible. It is flagrantly ignoring dozens of simple scriptures that anyone can understand! These scriptures among other things tell Christians:

- Be diligent, God rewards those that diligently seek Him (Heb 11:6)
- Expect fiery trials (1Pet 4:12)
- Work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phlp 2:12)
- Be overcomers (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21)
- Be alert and watchful (1Thes 5:6)
- Study to show thyself approved (1Tim 2:15)
- Grow in grace and knowledge (2Pet 3:18)
- Be a workman who needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2Tim 2:14–16)
- "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt 7:14)
- **Labor** to enter into the rest of God (Heb 4:11)
- Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2Tim 2:3)
- "If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men **most miserable**" (1Cor 15:19)
- "Not the hearers but the **doers** of the law are justified" (Rom 2:13)
- "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith" (2Cor 13:5)
- Learn from the parable of the ten virgins, 5 of whom are not prepared for Christ's second coming (Matt 25:1–10)
- The apostle Paul said that he kept constant guard over his life so that after he preached to others he would not find himself a castaway (1Cor 9:27)
- "…though He [Christ] was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb 5:8)

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, **bearing His reproach** (Heb 13:12–13).

Are Christians asked to go outside the gate where Christ suffered just to observe Christ or to imitate Him?

Self-righteousness and being lukewarm are both gross insults to God and Christ and their **gift of grace**. The people involved with either of these attitudes are focused on themselves instead of God. Self-righteous people are concerned about self-aggrandizement, the exalting of themselves. The people with the lukewarm attitudes are also focused on themselves. They expect God and Christ to do all of the work while they reap the benefits of a life of ease and comfort.

Self-righteousness and being lukewarm are two of Satan's greatest methods of deception. God and Christ cannot do any major work with people that remain in either of these attitudes. Anyone who promotes these attitudes either by example, direct teaching, or lack of warning against, is taking God's name in vain in a major way. So let us strive to properly use God's grace which He abundantly provides for our righteous development and salvation.

A Review of "Unmerited Pardon"

It was not until I had written most of this article that I realized the term "unmerited pardon" has far greater problems besides failing to properly express the full meaning of grace. A close scrutiny of the term "unmerited pardon" reveals it to be not only inadequate, but redundant, contradictory, and confusing. As explained in the beginning of this article, "unmerited pardon" can be defined by the easy to understand term "undeserved forgiveness". The word "pardon" (forgiveness) **always** expresses an action that is unmerited or undeserved. A person who merits something does not need a pardon, but deserves recognition, honor, or reward. We as sinners do not deserve God's forgiveness; we deserve death.

God's forgiveness is always unmerited because it is **never** something He owes us. But, God requires certain conditions to be met before He offers forgiveness. Before God forgives a person, that person is required to repent (Acts 5:31) and to forgive his fellow man (Matthew 6:14). An action on God's part that would meet the definition of "unmerited pardon" would be for God to forgive a person who refused to repent and forgive his fellow man. This will never happen because God does not break His own laws (Heb 10:26).

Another example that meets the definition of "unmerited pardon" would be for the president of a country or a governor of a state to pardon a murderer who never expressed regret for his crime and repeatedly expressed that he would murder again as soon as possible after he was released. In both of the examples given above, the pardons would be contrary to law and thus be not only illegal but also totally unreasonable and thus be an "unmerited pardon".

Hebrew Words Expressing Grace

Earlier in this article we quoted Acts 7:9–10, 45–46 which used the word "favor" translated from the Greek word *karis* to describe the special blessings of grace granted Joseph and David. The Hebrew word equivalent to the Greek word *karis* used to express this grace given to Joseph and David is the noun *ghehn* (*Strong's* #2580). *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* has this definition of *ghehn*:

grace, favor, good will
grace, i.e. gracefulness, beauty
supplication, prayer

A related word to *ghehn* is the adjective *ghan-noon* (*Strong's* #2587). *Gesenius* defines this word as "gracious, merciful, benignment". It is interesting to note that *ghan-noon* is only found in connection with God in the Old Testament. This word apparently not only means "grace", but "grace in its fullness and perfection".

Gesenius has these definitions of the next related word to *ghehn*, which is the verb *ghahnan* (*Strong's* #2603):

to be favorably inclined, to favor
to give someone anything graciously
to be compassionate, to lament
to receive favor, to be favored
to intreat, to be favored

As with *Thayer's*, *Gesenius* has scripture references to verify its definitions of *ghehn* and its related words. We now have made a thorough review of grace as used in the scriptures as well as how it is defined in reference books.

A thorough research of the scriptures will also show that grace sometimes has absolutely no connection to either "pardon" or "unmerited". I believe everyone at this point would agree that the term "unmerited pardon", as a definition of grace, leaves much to be desired.

Summary

A proper understanding of grace clearly establishes that it has a **profoundly** broader meaning than "unmerited pardon". "Unmerited pardon" confuses and almost totally destroys the meaning of one of the most foundational and powerful words of the Bible!

A person should be able to find a reasonably good definition of grace in any unabridged dictionary. Any good Bible lexicon like *Thayer's* or *Gesenius*, which were reviewed earlier in this article, should also have some good definitions of grace with examples of scriptures to substantiate these definitions. Many of the scriptures on grace, even on an individual basis, plainly state that God's grace involves much more than "unmerited pardon". These same scriptures, on a collective basis, profoundly state that God and Christ's grace is intimately and constantly involved in establishing Their righteous character in Christians and in providing for all facets of their salvation. This divine grace is abundantly and readily available to be provided to true Christians by God the Father with His supreme power and perfect, loving character, and by Christ, the divinely trained heir with all of His perfected human experiences and with the backing of all the angelic host of heaven.

Grace is not just a product of the New Testament era; it is thoroughly demonstrated in the Old Testament also. God is, always has been, and always will be a God of grace. Grace is the expression of God and Christ's personality and character and is demonstrated in how they think, how they live, and everything they do! God and Christ's grace is also demonstrated by the many and **widely varied activities** they do on behalf of Christians to develop them into true sons of God.

Sometimes the fruits of grace are received immediately. At other times, like in the case of the resurrection, it is a long time in coming. At other times, grace is very difficult to understand and may include fiery trials to help develop a person so he is prepared to receive God's blessings properly.

A person needs to receive and utilize the grace of God and Jesus Christ in order to become and remain a true Christian. One of the main requirements of every Christian is to demonstrate grace in how they live. People demonstrate grace when they reflect God's character and do unselfish, godly works of righteousness. God even expects unconverted people to show grace. If a society is utterly void of grace, God is strongly motivated to destroy that society. A good example of this is the destruction Sodom and Gomorrah and the world at the time of the Noachian flood.

True grace is an expression of godliness. The antithesis or complete opposite of grace is ungodliness. Grace and truth define who God and Christ are! God's word, which is truth, is a description of everything God believes. Everything God and Christ do demonstrates how to apply that truth and is grace. Christians are told to grow in **grace** and in **knowledge** (knowledge of God's word which equals truth). So Christians are to grow in everything God believes and everything God does.

Grace and **truth** are the two foundational pillars of God and Christ. **Grace** and **truth** are the two foundational pillars of the Bible. **Grace** and **truth** should be the two foundational pillars that all true Christians are developing in their lives!

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About the author: *Lloyd started attending the WCG in 1953. He graduated from Ambassador College in 1962, but derived most of his Bible knowledge from independent study. He has done extensive research on other subjects and plans to write about them as time permits.* 🕮

John 19:14: What Time Is It?

Many articles—some entire books—have been written attempting to resolve the apparent contradiction between **John 19:13–14 which states that Pilate was concluding the judgment of Jesus "about the sixth hour"** (Hebrew time, i.e. 12 noon), and Mark 15:25 which plainly says "Now it was the third hour [9 a.m.], and they crucified Him."

Other verses fit this time schedule saying that it was dark from the sixth hour (noon) to the ninth hour (3 p.m.) (Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44). He died the ninth hour (3 p.m. — Matt 27:46, 15:34). Other verses show that the Jewish leaders first judged Jesus, ready to take him to Pilate "as soon as it was day" (Luke 22:66), "when morning came" (Matt 27:1–2) and "immediately, in the morning" (Mark 15:1).

How can Jesus be with the Jewish leaders at daybreak (6 a.m.), on the cross at 9 a.m., but then still be finishing with Pilate at noon? My previous answers to letters on the subject stated that John must have been using Roman time (like our time), hence the 6th hour would have been 6 a.m. (*Servants' News* July 1997, p. 19; Sept/Oct 1997 p.39; Sept/Oct 1999, p.17). However, this requires one to assume that John used a different time system than the other gospel writers. We also must say that John's "**about** the sixth hour" really is as late as 7 or 8 a.m. Only two verses later it says: "Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified" (v 16)—which we know is 9 a.m. from Mark 15:25.

It would be most logical if John 19:14 said "about the 3rd hour" (9 a.m.). Then, John would be using Hebrew time and would agree with Mark 15:25. But just because we think it should say this, does not mean that it does. But what if someone who was alive almost 1,800 years ago said he saw the original writing of John and that it said the "third hour"?

While looking for some other information, I happened to find what I consider very good evidence that John 19:14 should say "the third hour". In the 200's AD, one of the Ante-Nicene Fathers, Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt, wrote about the problem with John 19:14 in section 6 of a work entitled: *That up to the Time of the Destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews Rightly Appointed the Fourteenth Day of the First Lunar Month:*

> "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat, in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. And **it was the preparation of the passover, and about the third hour," as the correct books render it**, and the copy itself that was written by the hand of the evangelist, which, by the divine grace, has been preserved in the most holy church of Ephesus, and is there adored by the faithful.

When Peter of Alexandria wrote this, he was not trying to prove any kind of point about the timing of Jesus' death, he was quoting the verse for other reasons. However, he notes in passing that many books had something else, but that the original manuscript, which was still available at that time, had it correct. There seems to be no motivation whatever for Peter of Alexandria to have made up this idea—it would certainly detract from his authority if any of his readers knew he was making something up.

Even today, a few ancient manuscripts still say "third hour" in John 19:14. But because the number is small, most of the master Greek texts that are the basis of modern Bible translations say "sixth hour". Only thorough scholars like Adam Clarke bring out the "third hour" manuscripts. See the unabridged version of his commentary on John 19:14:

> **The sixth hour**—Mark says, Mark 15:25, that it was the third hour. τριτη, the third, is the reading of DL, four others [other manuscripts], the Chron. Alex., Seuerus Antiochen., Ammonius, with others mentioned by Theophylact. Nonnus, who wrote in the fifth century, reads τριτη, the third. As in ancient times all the numbers were written in the manuscripts not at large but in numeral letters, it was easy for γ three, to be mistaken for ϛ six. The Codex Bezae has generally numeral letters instead of words. Bengel observes that he has found the letter γ gamma, **three**, exceedingly like the ϛ episemon, **six**, in some MSS. {Episemon = greek 'st' combined, similar appearance to final form sigma with a nearly flat top. Similar appearance to upper case gamma Γ.} The major part of the best critics think that τριτη, the third, is the genuine reading. See the note on Mark 15:25.

The only other Bible translation I could find that says "third hour" for John 19:14 is the Concordant Literal New Testament. **Yet I believe "third hour" (9 a.m.) is the right translation. Why?** It is consistent with the other books of the Bible, some ancient manuscripts actually contain this reading, the ancient writer Peter of Alexandria claims it is correct, a copying mistake seems likely and there seems to be no doctrinal reason why John 19:14 would have been altered.

— NSE

Can the Bible Be Wrong?

How could God let the Bible be wrong on this detail for most of history?

1. God left Bible copying to humans—who make mistakes or add enhancements when they think they are right. To prevent copiests from trying to "harmonize" the Gospels, their supervisors may have deliberately removed all of the other Bible books from the room when they were copying. But if their "master copy" was difficult to read in a certain place, and they had no other manuscripts to check for consistency, they may have made a mistake. Later manuscripts used spelled-out numbers rather than the short form—probably because the short numbers were error-prone. But since the John 19:14 error got into master manuscripts before the new procedure began, it was spread to most copies. Whenever we do something for God, we should do the best job possible.

2. We must realize that God judges us based on what we do with what we know. Whether we have 1%, 2% or 10% of the Bible knowledge that Christ had, He can still see our character by what we do. But when we see a new truth that most other people do not, what will we do? Will we try to remember it and work to make it available to other Christians? Or will we let the truth die, as others have before us? ◆ — NSE

Feast of Tabernacles 2003, Manville

You are invited to attend an exciting Feast at Manville Camp, Manville, Illinois, Friday night October 10 through Saturday night, October 18.

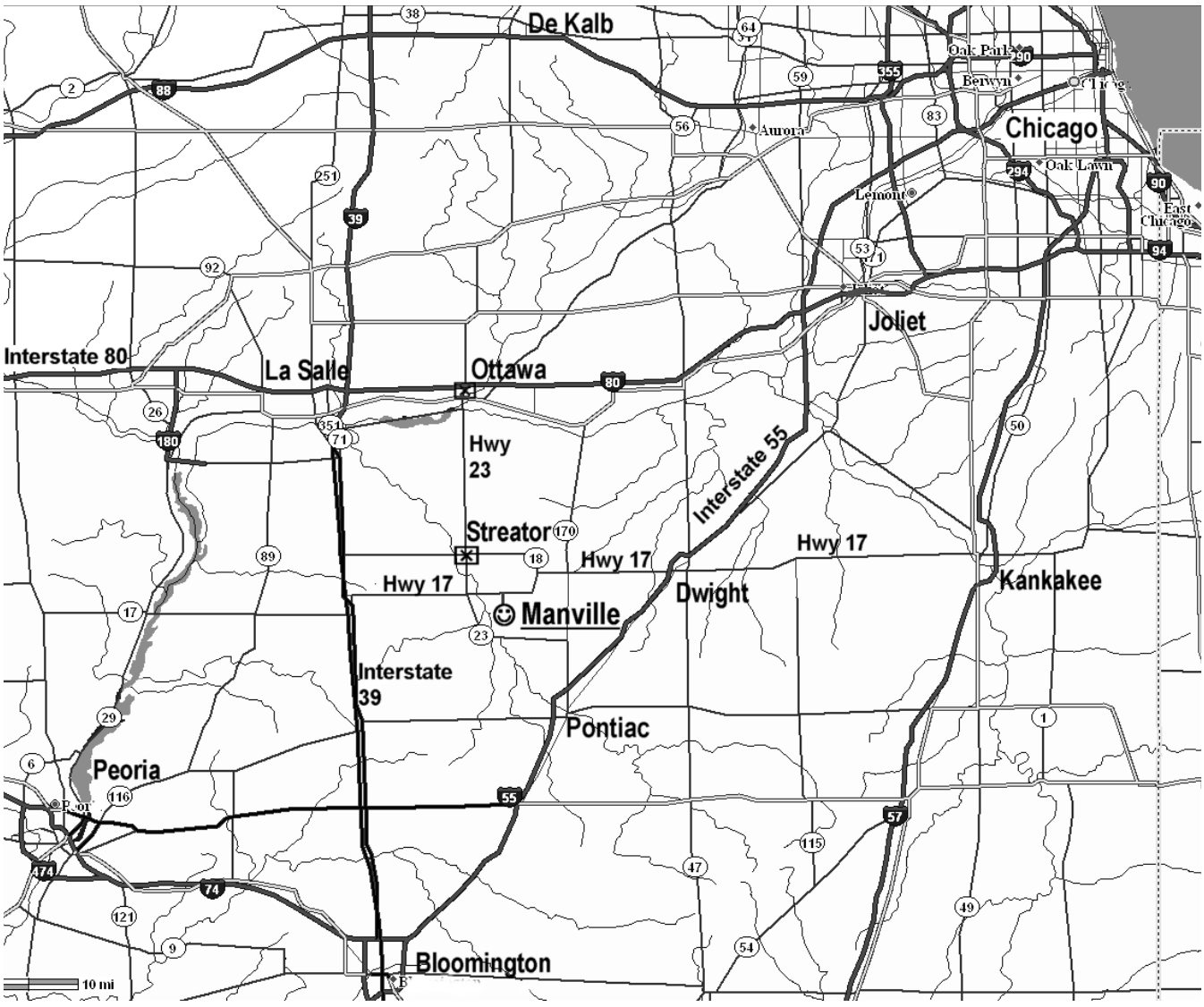
Where Is Manville?

It is about 100 miles south-west of Chicago and 220 miles north-east of St. Louis, in the quiet farm countryside of Illinois, shown near the center of the map below. Manville Camp is very easy to find—official highway signs point it out from Illinois State Highway 17. You can reach Hwy 17 from Interstates 39, 57 or 55. From Interstate 80, go south on State Highway 23, then turn left on Hwy 17.

Most anything one might need to buy can be found 10–15 minutes away in nearby Streator (pop. 27,000). But Manville Camp should provide everything necessary for the Feast: "tabernacles" to dwell in, food to feast upon, rooms to meet in, and recreation to enjoy.

> "You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. It shall be a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month. **You shall dwell in booths for seven days.** All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, **that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God**" (Lev 23:41–43).

This Feast will again attempt to get closer to the biblical instruction for keeping the Feast—God's people getting together in the "wilderness" to learn from Him and to rejoice with each other. The Bible says that even servants are to rejoice at the Feast (Deut 16:14)—it is a time for everyone to share in the work, not for people to spend lots of money to be served by others. In the future, all nations will keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech 14:16). The lead article of the Jan/Feb 2002 *Servants' News* explained the Bible teaching on the Feast in detail. (We will gladly send you a copy or you may get it from the Internet at www.servantsnews.com/sn0201/hastings.htm).



For the last two years, we bought and prepared all of our own meals. This year, unfortunately, we were not able to find a campground that both had the accommodations we needed and that would allow us to do our own cooking. Yes, I can hear some people who regularly attend with us cheering that we will have professional cooks this year. (But I still think self-cooking is a good principle—the more we do it, the easier it becomes—so I will still look for such sites in the future.) Most everyone will probably also be glad to know that all of the facilities (lodging, meeting, dining, rest room, indoor recreation) have built-in heating and cooling (no space heaters).

Feast at the Feast

The Manville Camp cooking staff will provide three full meals per day, for 8 days, at 8:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. The serving line will remain open for an hour for each meal. There will be no meals Friday, Oct 10th or Sunday, Oct 19th. There will be welcoming snacks on Friday from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

The menus for the meals have not yet been finalized, but the preliminary plans look very good. No pork or shellfish products will be served.

Sample breakfast menus are:

French toast, turkey sausage, fruit, cereal, donuts

Biscuits & gravy, omelets, fruit, cereal, oatmeal, muffins

Waffles, beef bacon, fruit, cereal, cinnamon rolls

Scrambled eggs, beef sausage, fruit, cereal, Danish

Sample Lunch Menus:

BBQ beef, tossed salad, vegetable, chips, fruit

Taco salad, toppings, spanish rice, refried beans, dessert

Fettuccini Alfredo, Italian sausage, tossed salad, garlic bread, vegetable, dessert

Sub sandwich with vegetable assortment, soup, chips, cottage cheese and fruit

Pizza, tossed salad, garlic bread, chips, applesauce

Sample Dinner Menus:

Pot Roast, potato, green beans, hot dinner rolls, dessert

Slow-roasted turkey and dressing, potato, vegetable, dinner rolls, dessert

Spaghetti, garlic bread, tossed salad, vegetable, cookies

Steak, mashed potato, tossed salad, vegetable, dinner rolls, ice cream

Homemade beef stew, biscuits, tossed salad, rice, pudding

All meals are "all you can eat"—the staff makes extra. The Manville Camp management is not offering any partial meal plans as we did the past two years (one advantage of doing it ourselves). Selling meals individually is time-consuming. Anyone who cannot attend the entire Feast, but who would like to eat some meals with us should contact us. If there is a simple way to make special arrangements for you, we will. (For example, if it turns out that we have 15 extra people who want to eat on the first and last day, they may agree to provide that for a certain price).

For those that do not want to participate in the meal plan, numerous supermarkets and restaurants are available 10 to 15 minutes away in Streator. Cooking facilities in the lodging units are very limited. We will try to accomodate people with special dietary needs either through the meal plan if possible or by reserving a room with cooking facilities.

Eating meals together is a very important part of the Feast. It is an ideal time to sit with a friend, join a group that appears to be having a good time, or to sit down next to a stranger who is all alone and get to know them.

Is It a Sin to Have Anyone Work for Us During the Feast?

The Feast is a time to learn and to rejoice. Our ability to rejoice today, while living in Tabernacles (primitive dwellings) is much different than it was for ancient Israel. At that time, many more people knew how to cook for large groups and nearly everybody knew how to be comfortable without all of our modern conveniences. It was not God's effort to make the people miserable at the Feast, but to get the people close to God, close together and away from the vast amount of "stuff" that people tend to accumulate and busy themselves with.

Someday, when everyone keeps the Feast, it will receive planning at a national level. Numerous facilities will be designed and built so that Feast food may be stocked and prepared by both trained professionals and an army of helpers—in a way that no one person has to work too much. Today, we should try to achieve the goal of self-sufficiency. But if we simply cannot find or afford a place that will allow us to take care of all the physical things ourselves, then it is better to find the best place we can, rather than not keep the Feast. People who know nothing of the Feast are usually glad to give us their labor for our money. It is fairly obvious that God has blessed the Feasts of many groups—even though they rely heavily on outsiders to serve them. ◆

Is Your Group Looking for a Place to Keep the 2003 Feast?

The facilities at Manville Camp are sufficient for more than one group for this Feast. Meeting facilities include an 800-seat auditorium, 140-seat meeting room, 40-seat conference room, 30-seat conference room and a 20-seat conference room.

We would consider sharing this camp with another Feast-keeping group that would like to conduct their own services, but share meals, fellowship and possibly Bible studies with us. We would need one of the larger two of the five meeting rooms, but other groups could use one or two of them.

Your group would need to agree to the charges mentioned in the article and agree to abide by the rules of the camp, but would have exclusive use of your rooms and be able to share in the recreational facilities. We would be willing to work out as many or as few combined activities as you like.

It is very likely that we can make arrangement for groups that use a calendar that differs from the Hebrew calendar by a day or two.

If interested, contact Norman Edwards, 517-625-7480, e-mail: info@cbtm.info.

We hope that nobody will avoid the meal plan just because they might be able to save a few dollars or get better food somewhere else. People on special diets are welcome to bring their food to the dining room and eat with us.

Accommodations

All rooms are heated, air conditioned and carpeted. There are essentially four kinds of rooms.

1. 2-bedroom cottage with bath. Varying twin/double configurations sleeping 2–4.
2. Motel room with bath and 2 twins or 1 double bed.
3. Room with 10 twin beds that connects to one of the above motel rooms—people can share its bathroom. (Good for large families or groups of singles willing to share the bathroom.)
4. Room with 10 or 12 twin beds but no bath—use the bathhouse. Families may use these rooms or singles may share them.

All of these rooms are located very close to a large, heated bath house with private showers. They all have a place to hang clothes, but you may wish to bring extra hangers. For 8 days (including all meals), room types 1 & 2 cost $270 for adults and $230 for children 4 through 12. Room types 3 & 4 cost $240 for adults and $200 for children. Little ones age 3 and under are free.

Several RV sites are available and will be charged at the "no bathroom" rate. Those who prefer to stay in a conventional motel will find two good ones about 15 minutes away in Streator. Adults and children who stay outside the camp may participate in the meal plan for $170 and $140 respectively. Anyone who neither stays nor eats at Manville Camp but attends services and activites should pay $40 for the week or $5 per day usage fee.

The **Streator Super 8 Motel** (1705 N. Bloomington St, Streator, IL, 61364; Tel: 815-672-0080) has daily rates: $53 single, $63 double, $6 for each extra person. Included are a continental breakfast, guest laundry and a small indoor pool. 11% tax will be added to all motel rates.

The motel that this writer recommends is the **Town and Country Inn** (2110 N. Bloomington St. [Hwy 23], Streator, IL61364; Tel: 815-672-3183; www.tcinn.com). It has 96 units and is locally owned and operated. It has a restaurant & bar on site, a large indoor pool, hot tub, exercise equipment, executive suites, efficiency kitchen rooms and offers free continental breakfast. Daily rates are $44 for 1, $49 for 2, $54 for 3 or 4. Extra people (over 4) are $5 each. King bed rooms are $53.

If you are planning to stay at a motel, make your reservation directly with them, **but also contact us, whether you plan to eat the group meals or not.** If you would like to stay at Manville Camp, do not contact them directly, but contact Church Bible Teaching Ministry, PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107; Tel: 517-625-7480; e-mail: info@servantsnews.com

Make Reservations Soon

The sooner we know who is coming, the easier it is to plan. Please fill out the form at left (or write down the information that applies to you) and send it in with a 10% deposit as soon as you are fairly sure that you are coming. It is much easier for us if most people send in reservations early and a few cancel, than it is if everyone waits till the last minute. We will refund deposits up to September 12.

Another good reason to reserve space now is because facilities will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. We try to use facilities for the benefit of everyone—the closest units may go to a handicapped person, the kitchen unit to someone with a special diet. We also

Reservation Form

Please make reservations as soon as possible, even if you may have to change them later.

- Rates are **per person for all 8 days**.
- Infants and toddlers 3 and under are free.
- Children's rates apply to children 4–12.
- Partial meal and lodging plans are not offered. Call to request special arrangements and we will see what we can do.
- Those attending during the day without lodging/meals may simply pay $5 per day.
- Fill in the number of people at the left and the total amount at the right.

Lodging with bathroom (1 and 2):

____ adults × $270 = _____

____ children × $230 = _____

Lodging no bathroom (3&4):
(RV hookup fee same price)

____ adults × $240 = _____

____ children × $200 = _____

No lodging, meals only:

____ adults × $170 = _____

____ children × $140 = _____

No Lodging/meals, day use:

____ anyone × $40 = _____

Lodging for Saturday, Oct 18

____ anyone staying × $5 _____

Total Cost: _____

Divide by 10 for 10% deposit _____

Balance = total minus deposit: _____

I can help with: _____

_____

Payments may be made by check, money order or Paypal online service (to info@cbtm.info). Send your deposit and this form (or equivalent) when you make your reservation; send balance (final payment) by September 19th 2003 to:

Church Bible Teaching Ministry
PO Box 107, Perry, Michigan 48872-0107
tel: 517-625-7480, e-mail: info@cbtm.info

try to be efficient—avoid putting too few people in a room that could hold more. But beyond this, we will give the first people who make a reservation the first choice of what is available.

If there is any way that you think you could help serve at the Feast—music, speaking, teaching children, organizing sports, doing crafts, coming a day early to set up, staying Saturday night to take down, etc. please write it on the Reservation Form.

Manville Camp Rules For Now

1. Bring your own bedding, pillows, towels, etc. They are not provided.
2. Pets, in general, are not allowed. Contact Manville Camp management for exceptions: 815-358-2522.
3. Camp curfew is midnight, unless other arrangements are made.
4. Rooms have locks, but the charge for a lost key is $5.00.
5. Food and drinks are not allowed in dorms, motels, gym or meeting rooms unless prior arrangements are made.
6. Roller skates, roller blades, skateboards and scooters are for use in the gym only. Bicycles may be ridden on the roads as long as they are under complete control and go slow when pedestrians are nearby.
7. Moving tables, chairs, mattresses, etc from room to room or from building to building is prohibited unless permission is granted.

A complete list of rules will be provided when you arrive at the camp.

Transportation

For people interested in flying to this site, Bloomington Airport is 45 miles away, Chicago Midway is 80 miles away, and Chicago O'Hare is 109 miles away.

The nearest Amtrack stops are in Bloomington and Kankakee. Bus connections may be made to Streator, Pontiac, Ottawa, and the cities mentioned above.

It would be easiest for us if you arranged your own transportation to Manville, but if we are given advance warning, we will try to arrange for someone to pick you up from the airports or train stations. A person should not need a vehicle to enjoy this Feast site.

Feast Plans and Schedule

The Feast site schedule is not yet finalized—we usually add suggestions and ideas from those who attend. We will include a basic Schedule below and print more information in later issues as it is finalized.

Friday, Oct 10th:

5:00–8:00 p.m.: Drop-in to get acquainted, snacks.

8:00 to 8:45 p.m.: Brief service

Every day, Saturday, Oct 11th through Saturday Oct 18th:

8:30–9:30 a.m.: Breakfast served

9:20–9:50 a.m.: Singing

10:00–noon: Service to include about 20 minutes of reading and discussing Deuteronomy. The law should be read every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 31:10–11). The last Feast we read it was in 1996. We will discuss the direct physical law as well as the spiritual lessons in it. Congregation members, including young people, are encouraged to read a portion.

12:30–1:30 pm: Lunch served

5:30–6:30 pm: Dinner served

Saturday, October 11:

Service will discuss the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles

2:00 p.m.: Bible quiz-bowl.

7:30 p.m.:Planning meeting for the rest of the Feast—everyone is encouraged to come.

Sunday, October 12:

Service will include a discussion and note-taking session on the wisdom of the laws of God. Last year, the congregation's ideas were used to write and record a song thanking God for providing for us, this year it will be a song thanking God for teaching us.

2:00 p.m.: People who like to write verse and music can come to help condense the congregation's ideas and form them into a song.

Tuesday, October 14:

Service will include a short practice of the recorded song.

Wednesday, October 15:

Service will include the recording of the new song. Everyone is welcome to join in.

6:30 p.m.: Variety show practice.

Thursday, October 16:

7:00 p.m.: Variety show.

Friday, October 17:

7:30 p.m.: Bible study—Deuteronomy catch up. Read and discuss through chapter 32. This will not be a "boring" study!

Saturday, October 18:

Service will include reading of Deut 33 and 34 and an explanation of the "Eighth Day" from the Bible. Also, we should have a CD of the recorded song for everyone.

7:30 p.m. until finished: Pack up and clean up hall. Help would be appreciated.

More to Come

In addition to the above, we will have other Bible studies and indoor and outdoor sporting events. (See the Sept/Oct 2002 issue for a description of Manville Camp's facilities.) A family field day and a karaoke night are also likely. We will have a variety of speakers in the services and studies—the schedule is not set yet. A new voice at our site will by Louis Williams, a longtime Sabbatarian who has had his own religious TV program on public access in the Washington DC area.

We would like to hear from you.

— Norman Edwards

Manville Camp website:

In the previous issue we incorrectly printed the website URL. The correct address is www.manvillecamp.com — apologies for any confusion caused. The website has pictures and information which show what the place is like.

List Your Site

Please send information about your independent Feast Site to *Servants' News* for inclusion in our next issue. There are many brethren who look for sites in a particular area—hoping to visit family, friends or some other significant place during their Feast trip. Some people want to go to independent or interactive sites. Unfortunately, most other Feast site directories mix corporate and independent sites together. Every year we have quite a few people who call and ask us if we know of a non-aligned Feast site in a certain area. There must be a whole lot more people who actually read our Feast section and find out. Please send us your information: info@cbtm.info.

"Story of Grace" from page 1

has to steal bread so that her grandchildren can eat. Mr. Bailiff, collect the fines and give them to the defendant."

Sitting in the courtroom that night were about 70 petty criminals, a few New York policemen, and her accuser, a fuming, red-faced, storekeeper. The bewildered old grandmother left the courtroom with $47.50. That was enough money to buy groceries for several months.

That's a very good story. It's a true story; but how is that relevant to us today? Let's review the event and see what really took place that cold winter evening.

Was the storekeeper correct in his accusation? Yes. The old woman had committed a crime.

Was guilt confessed? Yes. She admitted the theft.

Did her reason for stealing make any difference to the law? No. The law can make no exceptions.

Was the judgment decreed and sentencing pronounced? Yes. The old grandmother was found guilty and sentenced to a fine she could not pay.

Was justice carried through, thus satisfying the law? Yes. The fine was paid in full.

Was grace extended? Yes. The guilty party walked out of that courtroom completely free and her penalty paid.

Did the guilty party do anything at all to deserve or earn the grace received? Not a thing. It was free, and there for her to accept.

Was the law done away? No. The law is still intact. It's still against the law to steal bread in New York City. The law was neither changed, adjusted, sidestepped nor done-away.

Having received grace, is the grandmother now free of the law to go steal again? As Paul would say, "God forbid!"

Could we, therefore, conclude:

The law was fulfilled.
Justice was done.
Her accuser was silenced.
Compassion won out over the law.
Yet the law is still intact.

I think we have no other choice. What about you?

Actually, we started this story in the middle. Have you ever walked in to the middle of a movie, and then have to sit through the beginning in order to understand the ending? You see, our story actually began nearly six thousand years ago, in the Garden of Eden, with the fall of man.

Can you see the parallel? Can't you imagine Satan standing before God's throne shouting, "**Guilty! Guilty!** You must enforce the law! There can be no exceptions." And there was mankind, the weight of guilt too heavy to bear; a penalty too horrible to contemplate.

Does it matter how justifiable the reason for our crime, or what excuse we offer? Like LaGuardia said, "The law can make no exceptions." Just as LaGuardia had to uphold the laws of New York City, God had to uphold His heavenly laws.

Satan had succeeded it seemed, in forcing God to choose between destroying the law and destroying mankind. It's either/or. For God to be true; for God to be righteous; for God to be God; action had to be taken. Otherwise the law is effete [depleted of vitality, force, or effectiveness] and of non-effect. The very foundation of the government of God was challenged. For no government can function without law.

What, then, must be done? It was man who sinned; therefore, man must pay. But if man pays then man will be no more. Satan will have accomplished his objective; which was then, as it is now, to destroy mankind.

But what if there came a second Adam? What if another Adam should come who is totally obedient to God, completely sinless, and qualified in every way to pay the death penalty for all who come to Him in humble submission. Could He—would He—step into man's place and die in his stead?

We read of just such a Man in Revelation 5:5 where it tells us of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, who has qualified to open the Book of Life. As a matter of fact, we read of Him from Genesis to Revelation. The scarlet thread of His redeeming blood can be traced throughout the Bible. He is described in Philippians 2:6–8 as being in the form of God, but humbled Himself to the likeness of man. He came to serve, not to be served, and was obedient unto death.

Just as Adam's sin sentenced every human to death, so this Man offers eternal life to everyone who believes in Him. And having accepted and believed the works that God has done through His Son; we then become buried with Him in baptism into his death. Paul tells us in Romans that "…just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:4–5).

God's inspired word tells us in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." And in 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." Also in verse 45, "And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit."

What would our answers be if we asked the same questions about the grace extended to us as we did about the grace extended to the old grandmother? Well, let's do that and find out:

Is our accuser correct in his accusation? Yes. All mankind has sinned.

God Does Better than Man

In this story, the mayor represents God, but acts in a very human manner. The mayor probably did not have lawful authority either to replace the judge or to fine everyone in the courtroom. Whereas our God has all authority and pays for our sins out of His own infinitely deep pockets.

— NSE

Was guilt confessed? Yes. We have confessed our sins before God.

Did our reason for sinning make any difference to the law? No. The law can make no exceptions.

Was judgment decreed and sentencing pronounced? Yes. All mankind was found guilty and sentenced to a penalty we could not pay.

Was justice carried out, thus satisfying the law? Yes. The death decree was paid in full.

Was grace extended? Yes. The guilty party rose up from the waters of baptism completely free and the penalty was paid in full.

Did the guilty party do anything at all to deserve or earn the grace received? Not a thing. It was free, and available to all mankind.

Was the law done away? No. The law is still intact; and it's still against the law to disobey God. The law was not side-stepped, and not one jot or tittle was changed, adjusted, eliminated, or passed from the law. That includes the Ten Commandments. Review Christ's own words in Matthew 5:17–48 if you have any doubt. Having received grace, are we now free of the law to continue in sin?

As Paul said in Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

Also Romans 6:15–16, "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" But haven't we been told, maybe even read, that the law was nailed to the cross? Does it really say that? Well let's go to the source and find out. We read in Col 2:14 "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (New American Standard Bible).

What is a certificate of debt? The law is not a certificate of debt. It is never referred to in those terms. A certificate of debt is like an I.O.U. or a mortgage; a note that has to be paid. It was our decree of guilt—not the law—that was nailed to the cross. The Man who was nailed to the cross paid the penalty that was decreed to us. If the law could have been done away, why would it have been necessary for Jesus to die?

You see, it's not really an either/or question as Satan thought. It was not necessary to destroy mankind, and grace does not destroy nor replace the law.

Paul tells us in Heb 8:10, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (KJV). He repeats the same statement in chapter 10 and verse 16.

Paul is quoting Ezekiel. These are the same laws God gave Israel. By putting them in our mind God has opened up our knowledge and understanding of them. By writing them in our heart we will never forget them, and our hearts desire will be to obey them. In Romans 6:17 Paul tells us we obey from the heart. If God's laws are not in your heart, you will find many logical sounding reasons not to obey them, just like Eve did.

Can we, therefore, conclude:

The law was fulfilled.
Justice was done.
Our accuser was silenced.
Compassion (grace) won out over the law.

Yet the law is still intact, and always will be. Isaiah, speaking of Christ, writes, "…He will magnify the law, and make it honorable" (Isa 42:21, KJV).

I think we have no other choice but to say "yes" to all of the above. What about you?

Certainly our salvation is secure in Jesus Christ, but our blessings come from obedience.

Well, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. 🕮

Letter from the Author

My name is Del Leger, and I'm the pastor of the Christian Church of God in Grand Junction, Colorado. Until last fall, I was the pastor of the Grand Junction Worldwide Church of God, (chartered through WCG as the Christian Church Of God). I was the speaker at the opening night services for our Feast of Tabernacles. The sermon I gave so incensed Gerald Schnarrenberger (regional supervisor for the WCG) that shortly after the final collection was taken up on the last day, he rushed over and fired me.

As soon as we could get away, my wife and I left on a much-needed vacation; but after about a week or so I was contacted by our congregation and asked to come back and be their pastor. Upon discussing it with my wife we decided to accept. Of course it would be at the same pay as before—nothing. But that's a good thing as I will never be tempted to try to balance the truth of God with a paycheck.

Last fall was the most phenomenally successful Feast of Tabernacles ever hosted by our little group here in Grand Junction. The first two were successful beyond all expectations, with nearly 200 attendees the first year and over 300 the second year. In 2002 we capped out at over 500. Who would have thought that such a little congregation, with an average attendance of only 18 to 20, would be able to accomplish such a feat? The truth is, God did it. We were simply His willing tools.

The many small miracles that came our way at just the right time were surprising and inspirational, and proved to us that God was with us. Everything was done on a volunteer basis, even the speakers (except for 2002). No financial help of any kind was offered or given by [the WCG] headquarters.

Our successes were becoming too well known and headquarters was becoming concerned. So, they sent their paid performers in an attempt to control the speaking. God's Spirit, however, was indomitable, and held sway over the entire services. Although the hirelings held the podium, God held the Spirit, which was beautifully evident in the prayers, singing, healings, special activities, and the contagious joy expressed by so many.

Since other speakers (who were sent by WCG headquarters) felt the first night was not important enough for their efforts, I volunteered, and gave a sermon that many said was the only meat-filled sermon they heard during the entire feast; it received a standing ovation. Apparently, certain ones in authority choked

on the meat, so they fired me. I am enclosing that sermon for your perusal in the hopes that you might consider publishing it, so that others might judge for themselves the merits of the issue.

We are now an unaffiliated religious organization, incorporated under the name Christian Church of God, a Colorado nonprofit corporation.

We have already committed ourselves to hosting the Feast of Tabernacles for 2003 and plans are well under way. It will again be at the Adam's Mark hotel, and, of course, on the correct days.

Since we are now independent, we can again select speakers from our list of volunteers as we did originally; and we can now advertise, which we intend to do. We are open to all sincere applicants who wish to honor, praise, and learn more of God's truth and purpose for mankind.

Respectfully,

Delmar Leger
dlleger@montrose.net
970-249-6857

Late News

Anyone interested in the Feast of Tabernacles in Grand Junction should contact Coy & Annetta Colbert, phone: 970-858-9299, e-mail: gjfestival@yahoo.com, website: www.geocities.com/gjfestival

Mr. Leger reported that after a couple of months of being an independent congregation, their average attendance had almost doubled. Some who had stopped attending began to come again, others who attended sporadically began attending regularly, and then some new brethren began to attend.

— NSE

"Truckers Study" from page 2

In Nehemiah 3 we read about a virtual army of helpers, each assigned a portion of the wall where they are to each stand in the gap and repair it. To me that shows that we each have our own part to play. Even if we reach just one person, or do one thing, it is doing something to stand in the gap.

Nehemiah reinstituted many of the ancient laws of justice from the days of Moses, including taking care of the poor. One of the men was familiar with the land rest of 7 years and the Jubilee year, concepts which were rarely applied in ancient Israel. I pointed out that the whole concept of the Sabbath rest, as explained in Deuteronomy 5, is to show that we are free men and women, that we are not slaves, especially in these days slaves to our jobs. That was the same concept with the land rest and the Jubilee. One of the men asked how to reconcile the Bible's claim about the seventh-day Sabbath with the modern practice of Sunday-keeping. I said I don't reconcile them. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week.

One driver, a older lady, says she spends time in the truck stops talking to younger drivers with families at home. Her first husband was a truck driver, and she knows first-hand the hardship these drivers' families go through. After he died she took up truck driving and spends time talking to drivers about leaving over-the-road trucking on the premise that their families need them. Another driver pointed out that this was her way of standing in the gap. Precisely, and as it turned out, he was facing that exact dilemma and was looking for a way out. Her solution was to do what's right and walk in faith about it.

During the past few weeks I have become more and more aware of the employment problems that so many are facing these days. Some are out of work, some have reached a unbearable level of frustration with their jobs. It's no different in the trucking industry, where the pressures and demands have increased greatly over the years. Yet so many feel trapped by their jobs. So many of us are slaves to the system, and we should look forward to the freedom that is ours in the Kingdom.

[While it may sound "communist" to some, Jesus Christ will "redistribute the wealth" of the world in His kingdom (Ezk 45:1; 47:22; 48:29). Everyone will have only so much land. In the fiftieth year, the land will go back to the family who originally owned it (Lev 25). No group of people will be able to amass huge portions of the world's wealth. The ownership of land that produces food, wood, paper, oil, gold, iron, and outdoor resorts, will all be divided evenly among families and can never be sold. This will prevent the situation that has occurred throughout much of history: wealthy individuals use their riches to corruptly obtain even more wealth. An individual should be able to work only a modest amount, and still be able to feed his family. Of course, the Bible does teach that a person can lose his wealth if he or she mismanages it. Many have learned that lesson the hard way. But the Jubilee year every fifty years gives each generation a chance to start over—and prevents any group of people from owning large sections of their country—as is the case today. — NSE]

October 20, 2002

Sometimes I wonder if I get more from these Bible studies than the truck drivers do. I was impressed by the understanding that some of these men had today.

One thing that has been a bit of a puzzle to me is something we find in Acts 2. Peter quotes the prophet Joel and says that the day of Pentecost is a fulfillment of the prophecy that God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. If that's the case, then Peter was mistaken about something because the Holy Spirit has not been poured out on all flesh, at least not yet.

One of the drivers today pointed out that Peter didn't quote Joel exactly. The wording is different enough that it subtly changes the meaning and application of the verse. Peter quotes it as follows: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out **of** my spirit upon all flesh. And on my servant and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days **of** my Spirit." Joel 2:28 actually says, "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And also upon the servants and handmaids in

those days I will pour out my spirit." In other words, the word "of" is missing in Joel and added in Acts. That change is significant because it would imply that the Spirit is being given by measure today, whereas in its future fulfillment it will be a full pouring out. Can you say early versus latter harvest?

I give this example by way of illustration. If one goes into these studies with the attitude that "I am the teacher and you are not," you can really miss out on some insights that would normally not come out of our theological framework. Having fresh ideas come your way can encourage thought and further insight. We do not have a lock on all truth. I also think the men get satisfaction in knowing that they are making a positive contribution.

Special Note

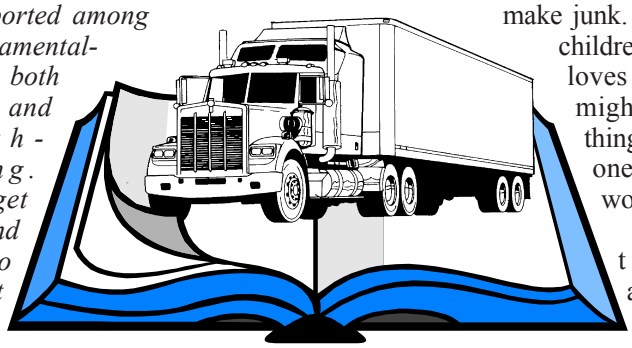
I found the following news item from the *Presidential Prayer Team* about the truck driver whose call resulted in the arrest of the DC area sniper. This man is typical of many of the men we run into. I understand that any reward money he might receive will be donated to the families of the victims. I hope to meet this man and shake his hand. Let's not underestimate the power of prayer in fighting the evils facing our nation and the world.

Sniper's Arrest Is the Answer to Truck Driver's Prayers. A truck driver who is just five runs away from retirement had a prayer meeting last week with 50 other drivers, just 20 miles from the spot where the arrest took place. The drivers met to pray that the sniper would be caught. "We knew the prayer was going to be answered. One time or another. That's the way we believe."

Driver Ron Lantz left Wilmington, Delaware, last night and pulled into the rest area at Myersville and spotted the suspect's car immediately. When he mentioned it to another driver on his radio the man asked, "What are we going to do?" "I said I'm going to call 9-1-1. So I called."

The 15 minute wait was a long one, Lantz admitted, and during the wait, the drivers worked together to block the exit to the rest stop. Does Lantz want to be called a hero? The Presidential Prayer Team would call him a man of character, because in his words, "I just want people to think what I did is what I should have done. I am no hero at this, no hero whatsoever. I don't even want to be [thought] of as a hero."

[This kind of news is frequently reported among Bible fundamentalist groups, both Sunday- and Sabbath-observing. People get together and continue to pray about a community or national problem until the action is solved by prayer or until they find some action to take to help solve it. I remember one time that I prayed for the sniper(s) to be found—but did not do it in an ongoing organized way as these people did. I have heard first-hand stories about people praying for their local government to be cleaned up, and for the prostitutes in their town to find new, moral jobs. They were effective. These sorts of stories are rarely reported in the news media (which in general, does not seem to like the idea that God ultimately runs the universe). Unfortunately, these stories are often not reported among Church of God groups and other religions that have a firm belief that the world as we know it is going to collapse in the near future and will not get better until Christ returns.



Make no mistake, this writer would be very happy to see Christ return. But I am more thankful for Christian men and women who have "stood in the gap" to make our lives better than those who have done little good in the world because they were too busy predicting the immediate return of Christ—and then turned out to be wrong. This is an excellent example of "standing in the gap", as mentioned in the first part of this article (October 6, study). — NSE]

October 27, 2002

Last week I had a discussion after the study with a driver who is suffering from extreme depression problems, which is a common problem among people in the trucking business, given the lonely nature of their work. As we progressed in our talk it was apparent that a big part of the problem was negative self-talk. He kept telling himself how bad he is, and it was all I could do to tell him that God doesn't make junk. We're His children and He loves us. We might do bad things, but not one of us is worthless.

As I thought about this, it occurred to me that it might be a good topic for a Bible study. In a sense, the serpent deceived Eve by telling her that she wasn't good enough and that she needed that something extra that God was purposely withholding from her. When they partook of the fruit, they felt even more inadequate, hid themselves, and tried to cover themselves because they were ashamed.

Job's friend Eliphaz (in Job 4) saw a vision. The description of the vision reads much like a horror show (hair standing on end, spirits wafting through walls, etc.) and this spirit accuses God of unjustly judging angels and calls people little more than worms. And that is exactly how Satan wants us to view ourselves and God—as totally worthless worms (KJV) attempting to serve a harsh, judgmental God whom we can never please anyway.

As it turned out, this topic took up the entire hour and a half today. Many of the people in that room (and there were twelve besides me) have suffered from depression and they shared how they have dealt with it. Many Biblical characters had feelings of depression, people such as Jeremiah, David, Saul, even Jesus who groaned within Himself and became troubled when Lazarus died.

I don't know that we helped those with the greatest problems today. On the other hand, this is a complex subject and each case is unique. Part of the solution is to accept those things we

can't change and spend our energies only in those things that we can change. In any case one way to deal with depression is to get one's mind off oneself and on others or the task at hand.

Once again I was impressed with the people who joined us today. Two were repeat customers, including a man who was with us just last week. This fellow I look upon as being a bit of a kindred spirit. Occasionally you run into people whom you recognize as instant friends because you know you are operating form the same perspective. I would put both our repeat customers in that category.

November 17, 2002

I would like everyone to pray for Johnny. Rarely do I use a person's name in these summaries, but Johnny and his buddies wouldn't mind me asking you for prayer on their behalf.

Johnny is a young man, I would guess about thirty, who has been driving truck since getting out of the Marines a couple of years ago. His company has just been activated and he is to report in a few weeks. Impressive was his perspective and dedication, not to mention his willingness to serve. He sees himself as helping to defend Americans and the American way of life, while at the same time hoping to bring a whiff of freedom to another part of the world.

Previously he had a tour of duty in Saudi Arabia, and essentially said that they don't like Americans, but from his perspective much of that is based on the fear of those in control that they will lose that control if freedom is allowed to come in. From this we discussed how the chief priests and the Pharisees had that very type of discussion when planning the death of Jesus. They were afraid that he would cost them their "place", or position of authority. In short, they did not want to lose power or control. In fact, the need for power and control is typical of cults, and not only cults, but governments in the grips of Satan. And not just governments. The same attitude is in such petty places as office politics. Human nature is the same all over and in all times.

Johnny talked about how Christians have a glow about them, and that is something he did not see among the Saudi people. Even Americans in general have a glow and openness that was lacking over there. "We can go into any truck stop in the country and strike up a conversation with anybody." In Saudi, there is no such natural friendliness. He believes that the big threat perceived by the religious leaders in Islam is the people perhaps getting a taste of freedom and thus turning their backs on the controlling form of Islam that permeates that part of the world. At the same time, it is the doctrine of the US military—and he agrees with it—that American presence is not to reform their way of life or overpower their culture. In fact, their role is as much to protect their innocent civilians as to protect ours.

The man was an inspiration to me because of his quiet confidence and content smile. He is ready to go and do what he needs to do. He is committed to his responsibilities and accepts them willingly, whatever they may bring. "I'm not afraid to die," he said. "I am willing to do whatever God requires of me." As I think about it, those are the same words we should all utter in our walk with Christ.

The question of whether Muslims will "go to heaven" opened up a couple of interesting discussions on the resurrections and the state of the dead. The explanation of Revelation 20 is one that is appealing to people who have thought through the implications of traditional theology and what that traditional theology would imply about the mercy and fairness of God. Revelation 20 has a truer ring to it for those who view God as a loving Father. Those who view God as a hanging judge might prefer the traditional view. But the hope of the resurrection for all and a chance for all is the kind of God most people prefer to worship.

I tried to get them to think through how it is hard to reconcile "going to heaven" with the resurrection at Christ's return. Hopefully, they will give it more than a shrug.

I try to take prayer requests every week, and usually with a group of nine truck drivers, there will be several requests. Today the soon to be re-inducted Marine asked us all to pray for him. I assured him that not only would we pray today, but every day. His request was the only one today. It seems that sometimes a request comes along that puts our personal daily concerns into perspective. Everyone just sat there feeling humble. "Your request is a hard one to beat," I said. Afterwards Johnny shook my hand. "Thank you for what you're doing here for us", to which I replied, "No, thank **you** for what you are doing for **us**."

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A Democracy

by Professor Alexander Taylor, circa 1779 AD

A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves largess from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates promising the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policy, always followed by a dictatorship.

The average age of the world's greatest civilizations has been 200 years.

These nations have progressed through this sequence:

1) From bondage to spiritual faith.
2) From spiritual faith to great courage.
3) From courage to liberty.
4) From liberty to abundance.
5) From abundance to selfishness.
6) From selfishness to complacency.
7) From complacency to apathy.
8) From apathy to dependency.
9) From dependency back again into bondage.

*Those who know God ought to encourage others to break out of this cycle. Anytime we recognize that we are beyond point **4**, we need to go back to point **2**. — NSE.*

Partial Literature List

All *Servants' News* back issues and separate literature items are free. Ask for back issues by year and month, and literature items by their **order code** (ex. **LITLST**).

Our goal is to bring worthwhile information to as many as want it at the lowest practical cost. The loose-leaf format used by *Servants' News* and most of the literature below is inexpensive and makes copying easy (most literature is public domain). You might wish to hold the pages together with a ring binder, staples, brads or a paper clip.

Items Featured This Issue:

Basic Literature

ALLIVE—All Who Die Shall Live Again! by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Comfort for people who lost loved ones.

BARNAB—Barnabas Ministries Bookmark Bunch by Alan Ruth. Three bookmarks covering Bible Basics, Plan of Salvation & Words of Comfort, and Internet resources.

BS7OR1—The Bible Sabbath: Seventh Day or First Day? (Bible Sabbath Association) Basic Sabbath tract.

CEMCOR—CEM Correspondence Course by Ron Dart, 8 pages. First lesson of a 9-lesson free course.

CBSG—Christian Bible Study Guide by F. Paul Haney, 4 pages. Overview of Bible study, 77 points to consider.

DECLAR—The Declaration of Independence & Federal Constitution, 10 pages. The Apostle Paul knew his legal rights as he traveled and preached Christ (Acts 16:37–40; 22:25–30; 25:11,16). These documents help us know ours.

UNMEAT—Does the Bible Permit Christians to Eat "Unclean" Meat in New Testament Times? by Steven M Collins, 14 pages. Understand food laws for today.

GDPROB—God, I've Got a Problem edited by Jerry Laws, 54 pages. Bible help for the depressed, tempted, guilty, worried, lonely, afraid, bored, disappointed, bitter, doubtful, proud and dying.

HEBHOL—Hebrew Holy Day Calendar. (Business card size) Gives traditional Hebrew dates for Biblical Feasts.

HOWCUT—How Not To Be Caught in Cults by Charles Dorothy, 32 pages. Easy to read, illustrated booklet explaining the characteristics of controlling cults.

LPROV—Learning from the Proverbs by Duane Sholly, 12 pages. For just reading Proverbs or for a thorough study.

LPSALM—Learning from the Psalms by Duane Sholly, 40 pages. Contains a large paragraph of commentary on every Psalm—two pages on Psalm 119 and 132. Large print.

MYST7—The Mysterious 7-Day Cycle by Ken Westby, 24 pages. Plants, Animals & man have biological 7-day cycles. 7-day weeks are an organic function, not a man-made creation.

NEWLIF—A New Life by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Basic message of repentance from sin, baptism and a new life in Christ.

REASON—The Reason for the Season by Pam Dewey, 14 pages. Historic and Biblical analysis of Christmas customs.

RESFAC—The Resurrection of Christ—Is It a Fact? by Don Hudgel. Tract for those skeptical of the resurrection.

SASABB—Scriptures About the Sabbath, 2 page tract by Norman Edwards about the Sabbath with only 20 sentences of commentary. No Jewish or Christian bias.

STATBE—Statement of Beliefs? by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Why an extensive statement of beliefs is not needed.

THINKO—*Think on These Things* Sheet Music by Barri Armitage, 33 pages. Inspirational scriptural music set to traditional English folk melodies: Danny Boy, Greensleeves, etc.

WAKEUP—Wake Up To God! by Norman Edwards, 2 pages. Scriptures to stir you to grow in grace and knowledge.

RELIG—What Is Christian Religion? by Norman Edwards, 2 page tract. Introduction to the Bible—shows religion is living by the Bible and Holy Spirit, not joining an organization.

FOT00B—Young Child's Bible Story Coloring and Activity Book, 24 pages. Coloring, questions & word searches for ages 2–12.

Highly Recommended Items Listed Every Issue:

Mature Literature

ASABB—Assembling on the Sabbath by Norman Edwards, 16 pages. Explains the scriptures regarding our need to fellowship on the Sabbath and how to do it.

CALBAS—Biblical Calendar Basics by Norman Edwards, 26 pages. Explains Biblical and Hebrew calendars (beginning of months, years, postponements etc.)

HOWGIV—How Do We Give to the Eternal? by Richard Tafoya & Norman Edwards, 36 pages. Study of giving/tithing.

GOVHUM—How Does the Eternal Govern Through Humans? by Norman Edwards, 64 pages. How the KJV translators altered Scriptures about government to please King James and an analysis of what the Bible says about how we should govern in today's congregations.

EJUDGE—What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment? by Norman Edwards, 83 pages. What happens to people after they die? What about "bad" people? "Good" people? Unbelievers? Diligent believers? Lax believers? Answers these questions form the Bible.

Study Resources and Information

FBIC—Freedom Biblical Information Center Catalog by Wayne Schatzle, 12 pages. Free sources of literature and tapes.

GIVSHO—*Giving and Sharing* Order Form by Richard Nickels, 3 pages. Has many excellent free items, low prices on hard-to-find religious books.

JOURNL—*The Journal: News of the Churches of God* edited by Dixon Cartwright. One free sample issue. Best Sabbath-keeping group news source.

LITLST—*Servants' News* Back Issues and Literature List, 26 pages.

LITNDX—*Servants' News* Literature Subject Index, 56 pages. Everything by subject.

LOCALD—Local Servants Directory, 18 pages. List of believers around the world interested in sharing spiritual gifts with you.

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