

Opening Prayer

Father, we come again with hunger and expectation, with joy and delight. We love being fed by You, Lord. We are hungry. We want to feed on the Word of God, the Bread of Life. And we thank You, Lord, for the Holy Spirit. We are thirsty and Lord Jesus, we come to You believing that You can meet that need, quench that thirst, and fill us with Your Spirit as You teach us and enlighten us. We ask You to give us understanding to guide us into all the truth. And we are asking, Lord, for more than just comprehension, but for an apprehension and appropriation of believing and walking in the very things that You speak to us about. And we ask all of this work and all of Your will in our study now, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Introduction

This third session in our series on *Growing in the Grace of God* is about living daily by the grace of God. We have seen already in the Word of God that it is not by law but by grace that we meet the Lord and walk with the Lord. Last session, we ended right at this point: discovering how the believer is to live by grace. We shall briefly return to two Scriptures to refresh our minds with the previous session's theme. One major issue in living day by day by the grace of God is the issue of humility.

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (Jam 4:6)

The self-sufficient and the self-reliant are not looking for the grace of God. In their pride they do not walk in that flowing supply of the riches of the grace of God. God resists the proud. He is

opposed to the proud. And so He humbles the hearts of the proud. Those who think they can handle it by their own best effort or resource will be broken that God may properly bless them with life in His grace. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. *Humility* is vital in living day by day by the grace of God. Humility is central to the recognition of our need by the grace of God daily. This is critical. It is those who recognize with God that we need His grace, to whom God is ready to pour out His grace upon and in and through. Humility: it is vital to living day by day by the grace of God.

Also essential to living in the grace of the Lord is faith. *Faith* is the intimate partner with humility for both are necessary to the abounding life of grace God promises. Humility says, “I need help.” Faith says, “I can trust God for that help.”

Through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in
which we stand. (Rom 5:2)

Through the Lord Jesus Christ, all of us who know Him have access by faith into this grace in which we stand. The very spiritual ground, the very condition in which we stand before God is grace. By grace He brought us close to Himself. In grace we stand before Him. How we access that grace that is all around us, as we stand before the true and living God is by faith. Faith is essential. Trusting in the Lord and His provision by depending upon the Lord and His supply: this is faith.

Faith is all about the Lord Jesus Christ—who He is and what He is done. It is all about who He has made us in Himself and what He offers to those who are in Him. To bring that relationship with the Lord down to very personal terms of a day-by-day walk by grace, humility, and faith

strike right at the heart of it. Humility says, “We need what You have, Lord.” Our faith says, “We trust that what You have can be our portion and that what You offer is fully sufficient for our need.”

Bearing Fruit by Grace

Now with that in mind, we shall look at living daily by the grace of God. We shall look at the desire to walk in humble faith, trusting God. And in that walk with God, we can be those who are bearing fruit and walking in good works and seeing a life of obedience developed. The grace of God is not just a ticket to some spiritual Hawaii with a spiritual sun, surf, palm trees, hammock, and tropical juices to enjoy. Now God gives plenty of those kinds of blessings, but the grace of God goes far beyond that. If we think that is what grace is all about, we have a terribly sad misunderstanding of the grace of God.

The grace of God is about bearing fruit. The grace of God is about abounding in good works. The grace of God is tied into, even producing, a growing life of obedience. The bearing of fruit is absolutely and directly tied into the grace of God. The grace of God is available to you and me; and additionally, that grace is able to develop fruitful lives for you and me.

Which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is
bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you
heard and knew the grace of God in truth. (Col 1:6)

God’s word brings forth fruit in our lives because it lets us know of the grace of God. And faith comes by hearing that powerful word. And as we hear the word of God and it speaks of the grace of God, our faith is stirred. The believer can trust in that supply of

God's grace, for it never fails. We hear of the grace of God and through His word, we come to know it in truth. We come to understand and rely upon it. That grace that we hear of in His word—truly the all-powerful grace of God—will not fail to bring forth fruit in our lives. The word of the truth of the gospel described here in Colossians 1:6 is the fulcrum about which hearing and knowing relate to the grace of God.

Having fruit in our lives is directly linked to living by the grace of God.

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another... that we should bear fruit to God. (Rom 7:4)

You and I have now become dead to the law—dead through the body of Christ. His body hung upon that tree and He died there; and dead men are not answerable to the law. When He died on that tree, we died with Him by faith. And as we are united to Christ in His death to sin, even so are we united to Christ in His death to the law—united that we might be married to another, joined to another.

We were joined in accountability directly to the law of God. Now through Christ's death, we become dead to the law that we might be joined to another. We were joined to one who said, "Be as holy as God." But now, and gloriously, we have been joined to another—joined to one who is alive and who is holy. To Him who has been raised from the dead comes a new life, a resurrection life. In that life and joined to that life, we can bear fruit to God.

This verse in Romans reminds us that it is not a matter of law, but a matter of the Lord Jesus Christ and the grace that is found in Him. Christ and His grace are at work in our lives, as we are now joined to this resurrected Lord.

Bearing fruit is related to being joined to Christ. Initially, our union came about through humility and faith. We were humbled of ourselves and said, “Lord, I am a sinner. I need You. Forgive me. I put my faith in You to be my Lord and Savior.” And we were joined to this risen Lord Jesus Christ. And now as we continue to walk in faith, humbly depending upon the one to whom we have been joined, we can bear fruit to God.

Scripture explains this in one of the most profound and simple and beautiful and powerful ways in all of the Word of God. It describes how humility, faith, and all the work of the Lord Jesus Christ means that fruit can come forth in our lives, spiritual fruit, so long as we remain united to Christ—as all His sheep will.

⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (Jhn 15:4-5)

Such a simple picture, but so eternally profound is this that we must take heed. It is simple to see how a grape vine and a branch relate together, bringing forth its fruit in its due time. This is such a beautiful picture and so simple. We can see it. One can watch it happen. One cannot see the mystery of it, but he can watch the effects of it.

There is a grape vine. The vine is bursting with the life. Then note the branches on it. If you take a branch away from that vine, it can do nothing, but if you let it stay connected, abiding there where the life of the vine can flow through the branch, you know it will bear fruit in due time. From the life in that grape vine, there are going to be grapes produced from the life of the branch. This is a fantastic picture and it makes this invisible, spiritual mystery so clear. Jesus is the vine. He is the life source. We are joined to Him. As we abide in Him, that life that is His flows through us. And the fruit that is like the life in the vine, Christ, comes out through our lives.

Now out of that relationship of abiding, depending, walking together, and looking to Him for life, we cannot produce those grapes. We can do things at times that look like we are. We can go through religious motions. “Hey, I am doing great with God. I read a hundred verses today.” But did you believe them? Did they touch your heart? “Hey, I am doing fine. I haven’t missed a service in twelve years.” Why do you go? “Well, got to get my attendance ribbon.” These are not the fruits of a life filled with the Spirit of God. These are wax fruits and worthless for all purposes save for display. They will never be able to nourish the body of Christ. One bite into a grape like that and you would surely choke. That fruit does not touch lives. That fruit does not glorify God. It stands as nothing but the merest of self-righteous religious activity.

But there *is* a fruit that we can have growing out of our lives. And it only comes from the life that is in the true vine—and from no other place. We do not need it to come from any other place. We are branches in that vine. Again, humility is involved. Jesus says humbling words to us. “The branch cannot of itself bear fruit.” Humbling words, but true! Jesus says that without Him no man can do anything to bear worthwhile fruit. Again: humbling, but true.

Maybe you are like me. Early on in the Christian faith, I read those words and they did not thrill me. They kind of provoked my flesh. Perhaps others could not bear fruit of themselves, but I was not *others*. Fortunately, through the years the Lord can really change your mind on things like that. He convinced me in many ways that He was right and I was wrong. Now I read this passage and my heart leaps!

The branch cannot bear fruit of itself. Now I recognize happily that of course it could not. Learning that was hard, but in the end, quite rewarding. Without Christ, we can do nothing. This serves to remind us to walk humbly before the Lord.

Humility is involved and as we have seen, God gives grace to the humble. But faith also is involved. “Abide in Me.” That is where our faith comes to meet our humility. That is our walk of faith. That is our attitude of dependence. Humility says, “I cannot.” Faith says, “He shall!” The life of the vine becomes our only hope. We are abiding in Him. We are connected to Him. We are looking to Him. We are hoping in Him. We are drawing life from Him. We are expecting that everything we need to have a fruitful life is already in the life that is in that vine. The promise to that trusting heart is, “You will bear much fruit.” Much fruit! Not just a little half ripened sour grape, but “much fruit” is the promise of Scripture.

In other words, great measures of Christlikeness in word and deed and attitude will grow in and through our lives—all because it is Him sharing His life with us. Just like the grape vine shares its life with the grape branches.

Bearing fruit is truly about the grace of God. It is about relating to the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that we do not deserve, in a way we could never cause to happen, and in a way we could never

sustain or maintain. But He is ready, willing, and able to provide that way and make that path real for us as we walk humbly with Him, admitting our need, walking in faith toward Him, counting on Him, believing what He said, not doubting Him, and taking Him at His word. As we embrace Him in this manner, we shall bear much fruit. The bearing of fruit is directly tied into living day by day by the grace of God.

Good Works by Grace

But the same is true about good works—one more reality in the kingdom of God that we too frequently disassociate from the grace of God.

Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (Jhn 6:28)

What a question! What activity, what work must we do that we might be involved in godly works—involved in the very works of God?

Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (Jhn 6:29)

The question is, "What can we do?" The answer is, "Who should you believe?" The natural thoughts of man are always what can I do? The heart of the kingdom requests belief in the work of Christ. That kind of trust leads to abundant doing. One who says they have faith and yet there are no works has no faith in God, of God, or from God. That is just human religious talk.

Yes, real faith does work. But to work the works of God is entirely dependent on true faith. Is there any special secret to embark on working the labors of heaven? “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” They asked what they could do and Jesus answered, “Trust in and rely on the one the Father has sent into the world.” Faith is going to be at the heart of a life of good works, just as faith is at the heart of bearing fruit. Grace is behind both—grace that flows through a humble, trusting heart.

Living by grace does not produce a lazy, inactive, do-nothing life. Now, that does not mean that a life of faith might not have its inactive seasons. Note the life of Elijah. “Elijah, what did you do all day out there by the Brook Cherith? I mean, besides looking for the ravens and your next meal. Or counting the centimeters increasing on the bank as the creek dries up. What were you doing out there?” He was a man of faith. He was there obeying and trusting God. There are times like that. But before you know it, you might find yourself on top of Mount Carmel, calling down fire from heaven, exposing four hundred false prophets—pretty active business. Both were in faith though.

Faith is at the heart of it. But we cannot simply look for a Brook Cherith and say, “I am going to live the perfect life of faith,” and then simply relax. We cannot imagine that a life of prayer, worship, Bible study, and fellowship with the saints is the life of those of feeble faith. We cannot imagine that in our strength of faith we may simply abide where faith costs us little. It is a trick. It is a distraction from the enemy. Though those days might be part of our walk, they do not define our walk. They are not the whole thing.

Faith is trusting God in the most quiet of times. It is trusting God in the most chaotic of times. It is trusting God times of inaction. And it is trusting God when you are battling hard till you cannot

imagine possibly taking another step. “This is the work of God that you believe in Him, the One the Father sent.”

Look how this began to work in the Book of Acts when the early church begins to live day by day in His body—in His body connected in unity to the head. Similar to the branches to the vine, we shall note the good works of Christ coming to fruit in the good works of His body.

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the
resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them
all. (Act 4:33)

The early church gave a powerful witness to the risen Lord Jesus. And it is tied in here to the fact that great grace was upon them. The great and powerful witness of the Lord Jesus will always be tied to a great demonstration of great grace upon someone’s life. It is a good work proclaiming the witness of the resurrected Lord. And we should desire to be a part of that good work. But if we desire to be a part of that good work, let us desire great grace to be upon our lives. It is one thing to love to greatly proclaim Christ as the resurrected Lord, but humility must admit the great need of His help. Look to the promises of the Lord, put your faith in His power to works good in you, and you shall witness His grace move. That is how they lived in the early church.

This comes forth in a wonderful way in Acts chapter 14. Early on as a Christian, early on as a pastor, back in the late 60s, a passage like this just came and went so fast. For many years now, when verses like this come to the fore, I just have to stop and chew on them, enjoying their weight and truth.

From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. (Act 14:26)

From Italy, Paul and his missionary team came back to Antioch, from the place they had been sent out. The early missionary team returns to their home church. These men have finished with their journey. They are coming back. They are coming home to the home church and to God's grace. They had gone out from Antioch some time earlier, traveling throughout the Mediterranean world, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ and the grace of God in places that have never heard it. These men were venturing into dark enemy territory and establishing beachheads of light and truth and salvation. These were church planters in the most radical sense of the term. And we are told in Acts 13:1-2 that when they left Antioch, their home church, they were fasting and seeking the Lord in prayer. We are told here that from Antioch they had been commended to the grace of God. The church entrusts them to the grace of God. The church turns them over to the grace of God.

Note that they were granted grace "for the work which they had completed." When we are commended to the grace of God, it will bring completed works in our life and walk. It is by this manner that the early church was extended, planted and built up.

We would not be today walking with the Lord Jesus Christ if there had not been those like the saints at Antioch, and those like Paul and Barnabas and Luke and others who went out, who were linked together in partnership to the grace of God for the work to be done. They went out in a step of faith. Surely their hearts must have been humbled with the impossibility of it—but they

were commended to the grace of God. And some weeks or months later they come back and the work had been completed.

Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. (Act 14:27)

See what happens when the grace of God is at work? When the grace of God is at work, things happen. They went out commended to God's grace. They functioned out there with God's grace actively involved in their lives.

We need to rid ourselves of the understanding that the grace of God is merely a benevolent attitude God has toward sinners such as we. Thankfully, His grace includes that, but His grace is far more than just a disposition of longsuffering kindness toward us. The grace of God is the active, powerful, moving, and working resources of God working on us, in us, and through us. That is how the early church was built. That is why we are here in Christ now. That is how we are to function day by day.

They were commended to the grace of God "for the work which they had completed." When they got back to the church to give the full report, they spoke not about all they had done, but they instead reported all that God had done with them. They gloried in how God had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

The grace of God is at work and God is Himself graciously working in and through our lives. These men of Antioch were the vessels through whom God brought light to the Mediterranean

world. Through them and by His grace God shined light into the darkness, bringing liberty where there were chains, forgiveness where there was guilt, and life where there was spiritual death. That is the grace of God at work. Living by grace produces lives and ministries and testimonies like those of Paul and Barnabas and Luke and others down through the ages.

Ephesians 2:10 gives a wonderful description of this. Building off the truth of salvation by grace spoken of in verses 8 and 9, Paul continues by describing the grace of God as working further unto the good works of its objects.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. (Eph 2:10)

Of course we are saved by grace through faith, not of works; however, we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works. We are not saved *by* good works. But we are saved *for* good works. And as we are saved by grace, it is that very grace of God that lets us walk in these good works.

We are His workmanship. The great work that is being done in our lives is first by God upon us and in us; and that is what leads directly to our good works. We were created in Christ Jesus. We were brought out of Adam. And as we are brought into Christ, a new life was created. We were brought out of death and guilt in Adam to life and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Created in Christ Jesus for this purpose, for good works.

It is the plan of God, the will of God, that your life and mine abound with good works. But we are not under law but under grace. No, we are created for good works which God prepared

beforehand and it is not by adherence to the works of righteousness that these good works will come about; rather than producing good works through disciplining ourselves to do good works, such righteous deeds will flow naturally from the life submitted to grace. The works that you and I are to be involved in, God has already prepared them before we came to Him. And He has prepared us from before the foundations of the world to walk in those good works.

We are saved by grace, not by works. But we are saved for good works and God already has them ready for us if we shall just walk by faith. If in humble dependence, we shall walk with the Lord in this life of grace, we will be walking in the good works that God has before prepared. The good works are there to be taken ahold of in faith by grace. We do not have to imagine them. We do not have to create them ourselves. We do not have to form and shape them. We merely live by faith and in so doing, we shall naturally walk in them.

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. (2Cr 9:8)

Note that God's grace is here tied to an abundance of good works. And note as well, God is able. Walking by the grace of God, living it out day-by-day, hinges on the ability of God. A life of good works is not dependant upon our strength, our power, or our resolve. It hinges on His ability alone. And God is able.

A humble heart reads this and is comforted; it knows that by its own power, it can do nothing to work true good. God makes all grace to abound toward His children. Sometimes we wonder about grace. We wonder if we will be given enough to do what we must do. This is the wrong

perspective. “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you.” This word, *abound*, is one used to describe the abundance of waves, rolling and crashing upon the seashore; just as such waves are powerful and overwhelming, so is the grace of God. There we stand and God is able—able to make all grace abound unto us. Will we receive it? Will we believe it? Will we count on it? Will we depend on it? Will we humbly say, “That is exactly what I need”? Are we running frantically up and down the beach paying no attention to the waves of grace? Too often we scurry around, imagining that we are building some mighty thing for God. This is the great myth of so much of our earthly works.

God is able to make all grace and all kinds of grace as well as any measure of grace, abound toward you and me. We shall always have sufficiency for all things no matter the need; we shall always have an abundance of grace available to us for every good work.

This truth here applied here to material resources and sacrificial giving supports the heart of God’s gospel message. He is able in all things. The kingdom of God is built by grace upon grace through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This can be applied any direction you want to go in the kingdom of God. Living daily by grace, we can expect a life of good works. Abounding grace is given for the purpose of abundant works. We should be expecting God to work an abundance of good works with our lives because abounding grace is granted us for the very purpose of abundant good works.

1 Corinthians 15:10, which John so appropriately reminded us of earlier, is Paul’s testimony about how this worked in his life. Note Paul’s testimony of God’s work of grace in his life.

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. (1Cr 15:10)

Paul was an abundant laborer. He abounded in good works. God's grace working through his life was astounding. He evangelized the nations. He made disciples of the children of God. He planted the seeds of the early Gentile church. He traveled as a missionary throughout the Mediterranean. When not accomplishing these deeds because of imprisonment in Rome, Paul wrote the Bible. He had an amazing life. By the grace of God, he had was used beyond imagining.

God's grace is an active thing, not merely cutting us slack and granting us mercy, but working in our hearts and lives for good. The pouring out of His resources on and in our lives makes things happen. Our labors on our own behalf will certainly be in vain, but God's grace toward us will not be in vain.

Look at this now: "I labored more abundantly than they all." No one was more involved in good works in the early church than the apostle Paul. He labored. He worked more abundantly than all others. And then he surprises us with a testimony that staggers our thinking. "Yet not I." None of his fantastic labors were of his own working; all is attributed to "the grace of God which was with me." Paul's life was filled with good works; yet, Paul was not the cause. He was neither the energy nor the drive behind such deeds. God's grace, at work in his life, was the dynamic force. And so, Paul labored more abundantly.

Living by grace does not mean we will never breathe heavy or never have a drop of perspiration. Jesus always lived in dependence upon the Father in humility and faith; he sweated drops of blood. Suffering and labor are the way of the believer. Living daily by grace can at times mean astounding measures of labor.

But Paul, in another place, lets us know that the intensive activity in which he was involved was not a self-striving labor. For some, tough labor or difficult circumstance is anathema—something to be feared and fled. Imagine Jesus fleeing His own labor of grace in the Garden of Gethsemane. We would have no salvation. It can get tough at times. But look at this:

To this end I also labor. (Col 1:29)

To which end does Paul labor? From the previous verse we note that he labors for the proclamation of Christ Jesus. Paul then works to this end: getting out the message of Christ—warning and teaching every man about Christ. “To this end I also labored.” Paul labored. There is a work to be done. The more I have appreciated the grace of God through the years, the more I have found myself naturally laboring. Because I have found a greater resource in God than I had previously realized, God has worked through me to greater degrees than He had previously. God’s energy, not mine. God’s strength, not mine. God’s supply, not mine.

To this end I also labor, striving according to His working.
(Col 1:29)

The word for *striving* here is the word from which we get the English word, “agonizing.”

Sometimes, in the midst of great ministry, service, and good works, there is a certain agony in it—an extensive strenuous expending of ourselves.

But notice what he says. “Striving according to His working.” There is the difference between striving and doing so according to His working. Striving according to His working is not fleshly striving. This is the grace of God at work. This is alternately rendered as “struggling with all His energy.” We are powered by the grace of God to work through these struggling efforts. This is the grace of God at work producing lives of good works. God wants us to walk in good works. He wants our lives filled with good works. But we can only properly do so by the grace of God.

Obedience through Grace

So then, our last issue for the evening: obedience. Much to my personal amazement, about twenty-one years ago, after I had been a Christian nine years, it began to dawn on me—my eyes and ears opened up by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God—that obedience is *also* a matter of the grace of God at work.

Remember, you are not under law but under grace. And though the law demands obedience, it cannot provide it. We want to walk obediently. It is critical that our life be in line with the will of God more and more. But here, like every place else, our lives are neither segmented nor compartmentalized. One part functions by grace while another operates by half grace, half law. A lot of us live that way. Obedience, many feel, is strictly an operation of law, a function of how well we discipline ourselves to work rightly. Maybe that is why we struggle so much and fall into disobedience.

We are not under law; we are under grace. Obedience also is a matter of grace, not law. Therefore it is also related to humility and then faith in Jesus Christ—faith in the one who once said, “I always do those things that are pleasing to the heavenly Father.” That one in whom we trust now lives in us. Christ in us, the hope of glory, always pleased the Father. Living in and through us, He can fully still please the Father now.

Philippians 2:12-13 offers brilliant insight into this issue of obedience. We are told here to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Work *out* your own salvation. This is not saying work *for* your own salvation, for salvation is not of works.

Yet we are saved unto good works. So this is about working out the saving grace of God in the life we live. Work out your own salvation. God has brought this salvation to you. He has delivered it into your life. By the saving grace of God, the life of Christ is in you. Salvation is your possession. Now work it out! God worked it in, now see that it flows out of our lives. Work out your own salvation.

But note how we are to do it: “With fear and trembling.” With neither pride nor arrogance, we should work our righteous deeds in fearful humility. Fear has to do with being awe-struck and amazed at God. Trembling marks uncertainty and humility, a sense of inadequacy. That is the way we are to live out what God has brought us.

“It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Now, by “His good pleasure,” we are talking about obedience. “His good pleasure” is simply that which pleases

Him—that which He likes. It is that which He has told us to do; and when we walk in such a manner, it delights His heart.

Here again we see humility and faith. This is how we live day by day by grace: humility, fear, and trembling. We cannot handle it of our own strength. We need the might of the Lord on our side. This is fitting for it is God who works in us for righteousness. We can count on that. We can rest in that. We can move out on that in faith. God works inside of us to develop an obedient life. Holiness, godliness, Christlikeness: these are the mark of God's work in us.

It is God who works in you. And look how extensively He works. He works in we who believe to will and to do. So many of us have assumed that once the will is there, we shall just go do it.

A picture in my mind came one day meditating on this verse. And seems to be that between the willing and the doing, there is a huge spiritual black hole. And “jillions” of Christians have disappeared into it. They had the will to do it. “I want to please You, Lord.” This reminds us of the attitude of the children of Israel. They receive the law and all of Israel proudly proclaims, “All You have said, we will do.” Then the hundreds of years of history in the Old Testament document their tragic failure. They were willing. And yet they failed. They were missing something essential. This is what they needed: God working in them both to will and to do.

Jesus said, “The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. So pray that you do not fall into that temptation. Pray. Depend on Me.” Being willing is only half the story. Of the twelve who said they would return, only two fulfilled their promise—ten into the black hole. They were certainly willing, but that is not the whole story. “God, I am willing. Oh, keep working in me, Lord; do not let me just run off on will power. I am willing, but I need you to keep working in me, Lord. I am

going about this thing with fear and trembling. Keep working in me until the doing is as full as the willing.”

That is the life that increasingly walks in the good pleasure of the Father.

²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, ²¹make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hbr 13:20-21)

There it is—obedience related to grace. The grace relationship with Jesus Christ works in the humble, trusting heart. Now, may the God of peace do this in us; may he make us complete. May he make us complete in every good work unto the end of His glorious pleasure and good will. May His work in us cause us to rejoice to do His will. God works inside of our lives, in our mind, emotions, our will, and our energy. God is working in us what is well pleasing in His sight. An obedient life is tied into the relationship of grace with Jesus Christ that flows to humility and faith.

¹⁶Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. (2Th 2:16-17)

What do you think would be written over your life if God Himself established your life in every good word and deed? Good word and work? You would say, “That there is a Christian life; that is the life of one who obeys God in what they say and what they do.” Notice, may the Lord Jesus and the Father comfort your heart and establish you with that good hope by grace.

Do you have a good hope that your life is going to be more and more established in every good word and work? Are you confident that in the things you say and the things you do, you are more and more going to be stabilized in an obedient walk? Do you have a good hope for that? Here is the good hope—the good and solid hope of grace.

A good, confident expectation that in word and deed you can obey the Lord more and more can be aided by praying this benediction over your own life and the life of those to whom you minister: “Lord God, please establish us of Yourself. We are counting on good hope by grace. Please stabilize us in every good word and work.” Good hope by grace establishes lives in obedience.

To Conclude

In conclusion, in living daily by grace, God works in us; and God works with us by His grace for fruit, good works, and obedience. A great and benedictory response of humility of faith to God’s grace for daily living is our final Scripture for this session.

²⁰Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above
all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

²¹to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all
generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:20-21)

Oh, may all this glory go to God because this is God at work. Are you asking God for a life of fruit and works and obedience? God is able to far surpass anything you ask or think; and He does it according to the power that works in us, the very power of God—His grace at work. That is why He ends up getting the glory and not us. We receive blessing to be sure. His grace can be dumbfounding. May it be so in our lives, as we humbly trust Him to pour out His grace upon us for lives that bear fruit, abound in good works, and increase in obedience.

Closing Prayer

Father, we marvel over Your plan. We rejoice over Your resources. We are so blessed. We are so rich. How good You are! How great You are, Lord! We call upon Your name. We humble ourselves before You. We need You. And by faith, we say that we trust on You. Do these things in and through us, Lord. Amaze us. Do exceedingly and abundantly beyond anything we could ever imagine. And may You get all the glory as Your grace brings it to pass. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Living Daily by the Grace of God

(Study #3 of 6)

Introduction:

James 4:6

Romans 5:2

Bearing Fruit:

Colossians 1:6

Romans 7:4 (not law)

John 15:4, 5

Good Works:

John 6:28, 29

Acts 4:33; 14:26

Ephesians 2:10

2 Corinthians 9:8

1 Corinthians 15:10

Colossians 1:29

Obedience:

Philippians 2:12b, 13

Hebrews 13:20, 21

2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17

Conclusion:

Ephesians 3:20, 21