

**Soteriology**  
**Lesson 4**  
**The Provision of Grace Part Two**

By  
**Dr. David Hocking**

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Okay, back to grace. Grace also is very much involved in our service and ministry for the Lord. There are several passages. But turn to 1 Peter 4. One of the interesting explanations of God's grace deals with spiritual gifts. Give me a word that would describe people who believe in spiritual gifts. Charismatic. You see all that is, is a take off on the word for grace—*charisma*, *charis*, charismatic, meaning a person who believes in God's grace. Well then all Christians are charismatic Christians. Amen? You see how we twist terms? All Christians truly are charismatic Christians, but we've created the term to mean something other than that.

Now it is interesting to me how fundamental it is to the issue of grace. You remember in Romans 12, where there's a short list of gifts, verses 3 to 8. It all begins with "the grace which was given to us." And here in 1 Peter 4 beginning in verse 10, it says, "As every man has received the gift." For those of you who are good Bible students, the word *the* is not in the Greek text. It's just every man has received *a* gift. It's not talking about any particular gift. "Even so minister [serve] the same [meaning that gift that God has given you] one to another as good stewards." God has given you something to manage. Good stewards of what? Of the manifold, sensational talents and abilities and educational opportunities that you in fact have demonstrated throughout your life that makes you such a gifted person. No, he didn't say that. What he said was, "it's the manifold grace of God."

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. If any man minister," or serve...here he splits all the gifts into two categories. You either have a speaking gift or you have a doing or a serving gift. And if you have a serving gift, "do it with the ability God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:11). So grace makes possible the whole ministry of spiritual gifts.

Now how does it demonstrate the manifold grace of God? Okay. When some of us talk about spiritual gifts, we catalogue it into terms that we think make sense to us. But the truth of the matter is that God said in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 that there are differences, not only in the number

of gifts but the way the gifts are ministered and as to how effective in operating they will be. It's very interesting to me. We don't like differences. We like people to fit into a category that we designed.

I'm going to try to illustrate it the simple way I can. But the reason God caused all of this is so that the manifold, which is a word referring to a diamond, light going through a diamond, a spectrum, it shoots out in many directions. The point is that grace is so wonderful, so broad, so fantastic, is that you can see it in a multitude of ways through the ministry of gifts. "As each one has a gift, he's to minister as a good steward..." God gave you something to manage. He gave you a gift. You have at least one. We believe you can have several. Some of the people in the Bible did. God gave you at least one gift. God wants you to use it for His glory. But He wants also to show the many sides of His grace through your gift. Now how does He do that?

Let me illustrate. One of the gifts mentioned in Romans 12 is called the gift of teaching. I am familiar with that one; so I'll illustrate with that one, the gift of teaching. Now there are differences in the number of gifts. Not everybody has the gift of teaching. Some have the gift of exhortation or showing mercy. There are not only differences in the kinds of gifts we have, but there are differences in the way it is used, 1 Corinthians 12:5. But it's the same Lord we serve. And this will demonstrate God's grace. God is so gracious that He allows you and me to use the exact same gift in different ways.

Now in the case of teaching, how could we illustrate that? Well, some people are very effective at teaching little children. And other people will use the gift to teach adults. Frequently I've noticed that people who teach adults think they have more of the gift of teaching than those who teach children. Well, all I say to those who think that is, "Why don't you go teach the little toddlers for a while and then let's hear from you." To me, it takes a lot more giftedness and skill to teach these little children than it does adults. My grandson, who's five, is now doing the same thing to me that his dad did. You're telling him something and he says, "Why?" But anyway I'm

sitting down with him, we were talking about things like creation and God and you know, he kept saying, "Well why? Well why, Papa?" It's not easy to teach little children.

Let me tell you something. God's grace is seen in a more interesting way than that. Because the Bible says there're differences in the extent to which the gift is used. And all of a sudden I begin to see something. Some people God has gifted to be comfortable teaching thousands of people at once. They're not enamored by it. They're not pressured by it. They can do it with ease and it doesn't seem to bother them at all. And I've also noticed that some people are very comfortable teaching one on one, or with two or three guys. And they don't feel comfortable, the larger the crowd the more nervous they get.

So, what is this showing? Well, it's showing that one guy is a lot more talented. No it's not. It's showing the manifold grace of God. See? It's God's grace that provides all these differences so that we will see that God isn't limited. He's not limited to anything. And it's very interesting.

Now, I have no problem teaching thousands of people. But this is the truth; I enjoy teaching small groups of people as well. It doesn't make any difference to me. And I know what it is to speak to large crowds. But I have just as much joy talking to a couple of people about the Word of God. So, I don't understand that. But I believe it manifests God's wonderful grace. God's grace has made that possible.

So we need to understand that grace is providing everything. How the gifts are used. What they are, all of it...it's all coming from God's grace.

Now at the bottom of verse nine, there's a third subject. Not only the person of grace and the purpose of it, but what are the provisions of it? I love this. 1 Peter 5:12, to me almost gives the theme of 1 Peter. Most everybody who has a book on 1 Peter says the theme is suffering. I'm not sure. When I taught 1 Peter, I chose a different theme. Which I think came out of that text. But look at verse twelve. As he's giving his final greetings, he said:

“By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you as I suppose I’ve written briefly exhorting and testifying that this [whatever he’s been talking about.] is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.”

So you see behind all the talk about suffering and trial and the pressures they were under, because they were scattered abroad over the whole empire, he wrote to the Jews that were dispersed. But behind all of that was God’s grace. You know it just opened up. All of a sudden, that one little phrase: “this (what I’ve been talking to you about) is the true grace of God.” God’s grace has been behind this all the way.

Just to emphasize that a tiny bit. Look at 1 Peter 5:10. After telling us the devil is like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We’re to resist him. And these afflictions are accomplished in your other brothers in the world. Verse 10 says, “But the God of all [what?] grace, who called you unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus after you have suffered a while will make you perfect, established, strengthen and settle you.” So what’s the real theme? The real theme is God’s grace. That will even sustain you when you’re being attacked and will cause it all to be turned into glory for the Lord and good for you. God’s grace is really the theme.

What I want you to see from 1 Peter 5:12 is that our standing according to him, the position we have in Christ, is provided by grace. “The true grace of God wherein ye stand;” that whole concept in the New Testament, especially in the epistles of Paul is great, our standing in Christ.

Now our state is not often like our standing. Our practice is not like our position. But my position in Christ is totally secure. My position in Christ means that I am righteous, redeemed, sanctified, all of these wonderful things, already! My position in Christ means that I am seated in the heavenlies with Him, though I haven’t gotten there yet physically. I have a position in the Lord that is absolutely secure.

If you want to study this, I’ll tell you how it came to me years ago. Not by books other than the Bible, but just through the Bible. It started hitting me as I was reading the New Testament that Paul kept saying “in Christ, in Christ, in Christ Jesus.” And that got to me. So I

then took out a tablet and for about a year made it my practice to study all of the passages that tell me that I am in Christ. Boy, when I got done with that, I never felt so secure in all my life! When you study your true position and standing in Christ, you'll stop evaluating on the basis of performance. You'll realize this is all of the Lord. I am in Christ. All the righteousness I would ever need is in Him. I don't have any of my own. And that is a powerful thing. God's grace provides that, makes all of that possible. Everything you need is in Christ and guess what? You are in Him.

Number two is your strength. You know when Paul was talking to those elders from the church at Ephesus who met him on the island of Miletus, He said, "Now brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His [what?] grace; which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32) That's such a wonderful thing. God's grace will build you up. It will strengthen you.

But perhaps the most powerful one of all is in 2 Corinthians 12. Have you ever noticed how often particular verses of the Bible at a particular time in your life will become very meaningful?

Twenty-three years ago when I had throat surgery, it was the most painful time I have ever experienced in all my life. They gave me a shot of morphine every 30 minutes and it never worked. I was screaming and yelling. The pain was so awful for six straight weeks! I thought I was insane. I wanted to kill myself. I really did. I knew better, but I just couldn't stand the pain. It was awful. You know your throat is really sensitive. And they start digging around and cutting things out of there, you can only imagine. And it was during that time that God ministered to me with 2 Corinthians 12. And it was the only thing I clung onto and it meant everything to me.

Pick it up in verse seven. "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations..." Paul had a lot of epistles. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh." Some people take that to mean depravity. I don't think it makes any sense. Of course, all of us have that

problem. Now something came to him. I think he's talking physical here, a physical problem. But it was inflicted by Satan. Satan can inflict physical infirmities on a person, the Bible says so— "A messenger of Satan to buffet me." To buffet me! Sometimes it helps to translate those a little differently. Beat me up. I don't know about you, but "beat me up" hits me different than buffeted me. No. He beat me up!

Paul is really in a deep problem physically. But he said, "God did this lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice (three times)." But the point of it was that there were three specific occasions. I even thought of my occasion. Elders came in and anointed me with oil and prayed that I'd be healed. God didn't want it that way. I have been healed, by the way, supernaturally by God. So I am a recipient of that, absolute miracle. That's undeniable. I'm here to talk about it. I have been recipient of physical healing. I'm talking instantaneous disappearance of something that was physical. Shook me up so much I was scared for days! But I can at least say for thirty years now the Lord had performed a miracle, a healing. But when it came to this throat surgery, cancerous condition of the throat, He said, "No."

Paul said, "I did it three times." Did he ask to be anointed? It's possible. I don't know. Because anybody knows that when you're in deep pain and suffering, you're praying all the time about it. But apparently there were three special occasions where perhaps group prayer was done and pouring out your heart to God. And God wouldn't do it. He wouldn't heal him.

2 Corinthians 12: 9, but here's what God did say unto him. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Look at the response. He says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Grace provides strength. Then I say, "Praise the Lord." How about you?

Now I've got a lot of physical difficulties. Do you? Some of you may be thrilled that you don't. Anyway, there are a lot of physical difficulties that a person has. And the question is why

God leaves them with you. Not only does not heal, but why He leaves it with you 'til you go home to be with the Lord. But isn't it interesting that the grace of God is what is sufficient to provide for you all the strength you need even in that weakness. I think it's wonderful!

You see, what I learned about God's grace is that He sustains you, strengthens you, helps you to understand that power is not in the outer man. That's why He allows the enemy to beat you up a little bit.

But interesting, isn't it that 2 Peter 3:18 says, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Our very growth in the Lord is in the sphere of grace, providing us what we don't deserve. "We are not under law, but under [what?] grace" (Romans 6:14). Our freedom, not a freedom to sin and violate the law, but we are not controlled by the law as a method of salvation or a means of growth. And that was provided by God's grace. And grace was in Christ. Grace and truth came by Him.

Look at 2 Corinthians 8:9. Very interesting verse! I have this on a gigantic parchment in old English lettering in a gold antique frame, huge thing, right behind my desk where I study in my office. Here's what the verse says: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might be rich." Isn't that beautiful?

What's he talking about in 2 Corinthians 8:1-9? He's talking about giving. The Corinthians were wealthy had not given the gift they had promised to help the suffering saints in Jerusalem and Judea. But the Macedonian Christians, who were poor people, not only gave an offering; they gave more, totally beyond their ability to give. And he uses the example, the Macedonian Christians to rebuke the Corinthians believers who had all the wealth and said they would give and hadn't given it yet. To motivate them, he turns their eyes to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why I like to call New Testament giving, "grace giving." That's what it is.

Hebrews 4:14-16 is one of the most wonderful verses in the Bible. And if you're hurting a little bit right now, may God encourage your heart with it.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of [what?] grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

God invites us to come to Him. His very throne He sits on will one day be a throne of judgment. But now He calls it a throne of grace. That encourages me to pray. God wants to give to me what I don't deserve. Just come and ask Me, He says. It's a throne of grace. And there I will obtain mercy, because I don't deserve it. He'll hold back from me what I really deserve, allowing me to come into His presence because of Christ. And He will give me grace, more grace than ever, to help me in my time of need. Isn't God wonderful? He really is.

Let's pray.

Lord, we thank You that You have chosen us before the foundation of the world; predestined us to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of Your will that we would be to the praise of the glory of Your grace. We recognize that salvation by grace is a gift of God. It's not of human works. We recognize that Your grace sustains us when trials and afflictions come. When we think we can't take another step. Your grace provides for us the growth that we need in Christ. Your grace will help us whenever we cry to You. You never get tired of us saying, "Help!" You've invited us to come to Your throne of grace. We praise You, Lord for the wonderful grace which You are and which You give. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.