

Growing in Grace #6 - the 'Much More' Grace of God

by Bob Hoekstra

The much more grace of God is the abundance of God's grace that is available to us, which is greater than our needs and is for victorious Christian living.

Duration: 1:03:43

Scripture: Isaiah 49:8, Romans 5:2, Romans 5:4, 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

Topics: "Faith And Grace", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. He warns that certain individuals have infiltrated the church with their own agendas, seeking to change and deny the message of God. However, the grace of God is abundant and can overcome any opposition. The speaker encourages believers to rely on the grace of God, which brings forth faith and love, and to be steadfast in their work for the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain.

Transcript

Father, you're so great, you're so good, you're so merciful, so gracious. We love you and we are learning more and more. It's based upon the fact that you loved us first.

We thank you for your grace that brought us into your family and we love to learn and to grow in the grace that grows us up in your family. So now in this study, our last study together in this series, just speak to us. Clarify matters between us and you and your great grace.

Work in a deep and abounding way. Even tonight as we look at your grace, may you pour out by your Spirit abounding grace upon our lives, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Study number six in Growing in the Grace of God is about the much more grace of God. The much more grace of God. The grace of God is much more than we yet know about it.

And the grace of God is much more than we will ever need. Not that our needs aren't great, but His grace is much greater. By way of introduction, let's read 2 Peter 1-2 near where we ended up last study and then build on that now.

2 Peter 1-2. Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Our last study was about grace for knowing God.

God, by His grace, reveals Himself to us through His Word, our primary insight, our basic ultimate insight, by which everything else is measured, the Word of God. By His grace, He reveals Himself to us through His Word. And then God brings His grace to bear upon our lives, in our lives and out through our lives, making the realities of His Word more and more our experience.

That's growing in the grace of God by the grace of God. Grace to know God. Now getting to know God allows His multiplied grace to come toward our lives.

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God. That is through the means of getting acquainted with God. God's grace is multiplied to us the more we get to know Him.

Not just added to our lives, but multiplied to us. That sort of leads to this matter of the much more grace of God. Though God has given much grace to us, if we'll just press on to know the Lord, He'll keep multiplying His grace to us and we'll see there's much more there than we ever thought there was.

Including grace for victorious Christian living, our first heading tonight. Grace for victorious Christian living. This is a grace which is much more than our sin and death and defeat and inadequacy.

Romans 5.17 speaks in a powerful way about this grace for victorious Christian living. One man's offense, Adam's offense, Adam's sin, allowed death and sin to enter into the entire family of man. That sin and death spread to all and death began to reign through the one.

That is through Adam and all of humanity's relationship to Adam by natural birth. Why is it that lives get so devastated, torn up, ripped up and ripped off? It's because death is reigning over humanity. Death, a tyrant dictator.

Behind death is the one who came only to rob and kill and destroy, the enemy himself. And over the world of the unredeemed, over every life, over us before we came to Christ, death reigned. And death shows up in fear and doubt and self-centeredness and brutality and cruelty and selfishness.

Alienation and viciousness and perversion, prejudice and it goes on and on and on. Death ruling over the lives and affairs of humanity. All those who are related by natural birth to Adam and his sin.

And that is a mighty measure. The magnitude of spiritual death that influences humanity is enormous. Just think of the world around you.

The newspaper, the news reports. Why is so much of it devastation and heartache? Because death is reigning over people's lives. But here's the glorious truth.

There's a much more grace of God available. The much more grace of God. See, death reigns over humanity and everyone related only to Adam because they only have natural birth.

But for those who have new birth, for those who are in the family of God, there's a much more remedy, a much more solution. We're calling it in this study, the much more grace of God. We get that title right out of this verse, though it fits many other scriptures as well.

The much more grace of God. Verse 17 talks about the abundance of grace. And that it is much more than is needed to meet the problems of Adam, his race and their sin and death.

Thereby we see the much more grace of God, our consideration. All of us born in the natural line of Adam. Death reigned over us.

Doubt and fear and self-centeredness, disobedience to God. Sin and death and alienation. But we are now those who have begun to receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.

And that's what allows us to reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. Those born only once, therefore related to Adam in natural birth, death reigns over them. Those born again with spiritual life, new life, through Jesus Christ, they can learn to reign in life.

Those with one birth, natural, only human flesh resource, death reigns over them. We who are related to Christ, we can learn to reign in life. How? By the much more grace of God.

God's grace is for victorious Christian living. Mentioned here is the gift of righteousness and the abundance of grace. Now, the gift of righteousness, that's what lets us stand accepted before a holy God.

God is righteous, man is unrighteous. How can we approach Him? God offers the gift of righteousness through Jesus Christ. Where righteousness is given to us.

And the righteousness of Christ is what we approach the Father with. And it's acceptable to the Father. That gift of righteousness that lets us come in His family and stand before Him and fellowship with Him.

And of course that is by His grace. Ephesians 2.89, by grace you're saved through faith. But notice, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one Jesus Christ.

Why are there not more victorious Christians in the family of God? Why are too many, so many Christians in defeat, without victory, their lives still somewhat dominated by many of the influences that held them in bondage before they came to Christ? The reason is right here in Romans 5.17. They have not appreciated, they have not appropriated, they have not thrown themselves upon the much more grace of God. Oh, they maybe know of the grace that forgives sins and gets you into the family of God, but they've not drawn on, lived by, counted on, the abundance of grace that can let you reign in life. They're in life, they have eternal life, they're born again, but there's no reigning in life.

They aren't victorious Christ-like overcomers. Why? Because of this lack. The abundance of grace is not at work in their lives.

It's those who receive the abundance of grace. They're the ones who reign in life. If we want to be victorious Christians and God calls us to walk in victory, it's by receiving the abundance of His grace, learning more and more how rich it is, learning more and more how to count on it, depend on it, and live by it.

The abundance of grace lets us reign in life through the one Jesus Christ. Death reigned over us before Christ came into our lives. We can now learn to reign in life through Christ as we keep receiving the abundance of His grace.

And according to this verse, this abundance of His grace is much more than able to do the necessary transforming work to take us from death reigning over us to us reigning in life with Christ. Verse 20 speaks more of this much more grace of God. Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound.

We looked early on in our studies about the law. If it can't save you, can't sanctify and mature you, what does it do? It points out the abounding reality of the offenses of sin against God. The law entered that the offense might abound, that sin might be known as sin, and sinful hearts might be flushed out in open rebellion.

And that behavior, contrary to that law, guilty before God. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. Again, we have the much more grace of God.

However high sin had abounded in our lives, grace was able to abound much more. Think of your own life. How many times and in how many ways did sin abound? The word here is one used in the first century for waves rolling up on the seashore.

How many times did waves of sin roll over your life? Stack up pretty high on the seashore of your life. Well, in Christ, how many waves rolled up and how high the pile of sin was? Grace abounded much more. If need be, a tidal wave of the forgiving grace of God swept over those sins.

How about the effects, the marks, the fears, the confusion, the bad thinking, the fruitlessness, the bondage and everything else that was left from those sins? Well, where sin abounded, grace abounded much more. God's grace is able to just keep rolling in wave after wave, comforting, cleansing, renewing, encouraging, strengthening, liberating. The much more grace of God.

The more I look at the grace of God, the more I marvel how much I overlooked it early on in the Christian life. The more I teach about the grace of God, the more I marvel how I missed the significance of it in the early years that I taught the word of God. One of my favorite issues in all of the scripture is our last study of this series.

The much more grace of God. It's much more than any of us ever thought it was. It's much more able than we ever imagined it was.

And it's much more than we could ever need, even though our needs can go out of sight. The much more grace of God. 1 Corinthians 15, 57 and 58, without using this terminology, speaks the same kind of truth.

1 Corinthians 15, 57 and 58. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Thanks be to God for many reasons, but here the reason is He gives us the victory. We're talking about grace for victorious Christian living. This is a victory verse, a victory chapter.

And victory, spiritual victory, is God's grace gift to our lives through faith. The just shall live by faith. We walk by faith, not by sight.

How do we know we have victory over sin and death? Because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaimed powerfully in 1 Corinthians 15. And we believe in the Lord Jesus, the risen victorious Lord. And we can thank God who gives us the victory, how? Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a resurrection victory over sin and death. And it is more than enough grace for a steady, solid, overflowing, effective ministry. Verse 58, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

On what basis? Look at that. Therefore, that ties back to verse 57. A victorious gift given to us.

Victory through Jesus Christ over sin and death. Therefore, we can be those brethren who can be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. You know, our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Don't forget, our labor on our own is in vain. Apart from me, you can do nothing, Jesus said. That humbling word.

Your labor is not in vain in the Lord. We keep talking all along the way about humility and faith. God gives grace to the humble.

The just shall live by faith. We have access through faith into this grace in which we stand, Romans 5.2. We're seeing it tonight. On our own, our natural resources, the best we can come up with, death reigns over that.

Only through Christ can we reign in life. Humility on our own, death will reign over us. Faith through Christ, believing in Him, we can reign in life as we draw on, receive, rely on His abundant grace.

The much more grace of God. Part of the story is it's God's grace for victorious Christian living. But also the much more grace of God can be thought of and is spoken of in the word of God in very closely related terms.

And that is God's grace changing and drawing lives. This is about the grace of God which is more than able to transform us and then knit other lives with us. Drawing other lives toward us by the grace of God that we might touch them and minister to them.

1 Timothy 1, 12-14. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. That is the service of the Lord.

Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man. But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

Here the apostle Paul is giving thanks to Jesus Christ who enabled him. Those are words that infer the grace of God at work. God enabling Paul.

Because God counted him faithful. The only way we can ever be faithful is by God enabling us, enabling us to walk in a faithful path. And God put him into the ministry and He puts us into service.

Notice this. God used Paul although he was formerly a blasphemer. He said things against the character and the work of God.

He was a persecutor. And he was an insolent man, a petulant man, a scornful scoffing man, a proud man. Now in the eyes of the culture around him, he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

He was Mr. Israel. As far as rising to the top of a religious culture, he was at the top. And yet in God's eyes, here's what he was.

A blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man. In Israel, he was respected, had power, influence and someone to be trusted and looked up to. Oh, how differently man views things from God.

Sounds like here's a man that could not be used of God. A blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man. Even took part in the murder of Stephen.

He oversaw it. He held the cloaks and garments of those stoning this blessed, fruitful, spirit-filled servant of the Lord. But here's the amazing thing.

God changed everything. And he can do the same for us. How many of us have thought we just could not be used for the glory of the Lord? Maybe some among us right now even have that conviction tonight.

Oh, listen. Those are the lies, the accusations, the condemnations of the enemy. And he can build a tremendous case.

He's an outstanding prosecuting, persecuting attorney. But there's one thing that he can't deal with. And there is one thing that will deal with all of that in our lives.

And that is the much more grace of God. See verse 14? And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant. Yes, we're talking much more in measure.

Exceedingly abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. When Paul had been humbled, knocked off his mount, riding to Damascus to take more Christians captive. He was humbled and threw himself on the grace of the Lord.

And in that grace he found faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. And as he grew in faith and love, as he grew in dependence upon God and love of God and love from God. The grace of the Lord was proving exceedingly abundant.

Bringing forth all these resources that are in Christ Jesus. We've looked at some of them already in our study. See it was the grace of God.

The much more grace of God. Here called the exceedingly abundant grace of God. That's what turned the Apostle Paul from a blasphemer, a persecutor, an insolent man.

Into a fruitful, faithful, humble, victorious servant of the living God. All I can say is put my name in there. The only reason I'm ministering the word of God at this moment.

Instead of under condemnation, death reigning over me and awaiting an eternal death sentence. Is the exceedingly abundant grace of God. It changes everything.

We throw ourselves on the mercy and grace of God. We can go from one of the major enemies of God and his work. To a fruitful abounding vessel in his hand.

That's what the scriptures is talking about when we consider the much more grace of God. Much more than we know about it. Much more than we'll ever need.

We just need to keep receiving of the abundance of it. Again, back to where we started in our series of studies. Too many of us thought the grace of God was equal to the forgiveness of God.

No, the grace of God is greater than the forgiveness of God. That does not diminish the forgiveness of God. It is majestic and priceless.

It's just the first taste we get of the grace of God. And we're to receive of the abundance of grace. That's what these passages are talking about.

Paul did and look what happened in his life. Brothers, sisters, let's not live under letter of the law self-striving. Let's not live under self-righteousness.

Lifting ourselves and condemning others. Let's live as humble servants who throw ourselves in faith on the much more grace of God. Changes everything.

Turns death into life. Grace changes lives. And 2 Corinthians 9 shows us grace draws lives as well.

Changing and drawing lives. 2 Corinthians 9.14 And by their prayer for you who long for you. Why? Because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

Paul is speaking here of one group of Christians praying for another. And he says the reason they long for you, the reason they yearn for you and express it through prayer, is because of the exceeding grace of God in you. As we allow the grace of God, the much more grace of God, to work in our lives in an ever increasing manner, other lives are drawn to us by that same grace that's working in us and on us.

And this allows us to minister to them by that same grace of God that's changing our lives. I have seen this dynamic here in 2 Corinthians 9.14 work in my heart toward other people. I think now of some Christians, names and faces running across my mind.

Lives in whom the much more grace of God has been greatly received. And I tell you, it makes me yearn for them. I think about them.

I pray for them. I love to hang out with them. And every time I do, it's more grace upon grace and more life abundant.

Oh, let's let God make us vessels of His grace. I have Christian friends that I'm sad to say and sorry to say, they live in self-righteousness. No one's as good as they are.

Condemnation for everyone. Striving under the letter of the law and they think they're doing so well. They don't really hear what the law is saying.

And I tell you, I think of them. I don't yearn for another opportunity to fellowship with them. I ache and yearn that God would change their lives and spare me from another blast from their furnace.

Oh, let's seek the Lord to become vessels of His much more grace. It draws lives to us. You may know people in whom God's graces work greatly.

Don't you just long to be with them? Don't you just think about them now and then and pray for them? That's exactly what's going on here. A group of Christians praying for another group. Why? Because of the exceeding grace of God in you.

They long for you. They yearn for you. The much more grace of God changes lives and draws lives.

We let the grace of God work greatly in us, fill us up more and more, flow out to others. People will want to be with us, hang out with us, pray with us, talk with us. You know what's going to happen? That grace touches their lives.

That's another great picture of ministry. Just being willing to become vessels of the much more grace of God so people yearn to get close to that, and it spills out on them. What a great way to minister.

What? You want to hang out? Oh, okay. Have some of this. Just let some of that much more grace of God splash out and touch people's lives.

Beautiful picture of the much more grace of God. Grace changing and drawing lives. Now, a couple of warnings concerning grace.

By God's grace, He warns us about His grace because we don't want to wrongly relate to the grace of God. Jude, verse 4. A little book before Revelation. Verse 3. Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you, exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith, which was once for all delivered to the saints.

The Word of God, the content of truth, called the faith, in which we place our faith, the faith in which we place our faith. God has delivered this message of the faith into our lives. Says to the church, here's my word.

Now, earnestly contend for it. In it is what I want to say to my people till I come back. Once for all delivered to the saints.

Put your faith in it and earnestly contend for it. Stand up for it. Keep it pure.

Keep it true. Live it out. Don't compromise it.

Exhort, warn, even admonish and rebuke and reprove, if necessary, others who want to compromise it and change its message. Earnestly contend for the faith. We've been doing some of that in this study.

In fact, we've been doing it on a very critical issue. We've been earnestly contending. Live by the grace of God, for the grace of God, to the glory of God.

Don't live by the letter of the law. Don't put others under the letter of the law. Earnestly contending for the faith, because at the heart of the faith, at the heart of the message of the word of God, is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To keep all of the word of God in its whole council of God context, we must always have a perspective of where does the grace of God fit. In this book, this passage, this verse, this issue. Sort of like we so often, no matter what we're sharing with people, from wherever in the word of God, we often include the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Whether we're sharing from Haggai or Ezekiel, the Psalms of the Gospels. Why? Because it's at the heart of God and the heart of the whole council of God. Sort of like we so often, no matter what we're sharing with people, from wherever in the word of God, we often include the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Whether we're sharing from Haggai or Ezekiel, the Psalms of the Gospels. Why? Because it's at the heart of God and the heart of the whole council of God. Well, just as that's true concerning justification, salvation and new birth, right at the heart of the context of the entire council of God is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we've been earnestly contending for that while we've been teaching about it. And there are many great issues like that that we're to contend for earnestly. We're to contend for the word of God, its reliability, authority, veracity, inspiration, sufficiency, things like that.

The deity of Christ, the sufficiency of Christ, the love of God. There are some things we just must contend for. Not be nasty, ugly and contentious, but speak the truth in love and don't compromise.

We've been doing that a lot concerning the grace of God. But verse 4 tells us in a broad sense why we must earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Verse 4, for certain men have crept in unnoticed.

One of the reasons we must earnestly with our heart stand up for the truth and the message of the word of God is people creep in to the family of God. Creep in to the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Creep in to positions of ministry and they want to change things and deny things.

These are men long ago marked out for this condemnation. That is if they're going to mess up the message, face great condemnation. Ungodly men.

Men who have their own agenda or their own message. And look what they do. Who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Men who deny the Lord and change His message of grace. We don't want to be those who turn the grace of our God into lewdness. We don't want to cooperate with, assist, endorse and further those who want to turn the grace of our God into lewdness.

Those who say, hey, no problem if I live like this. No problem if I feed on R-rated movies. No problem if I take home disgusting videos.

No problem if I hang out with compromising Christians and never say a word of exhortation to them. Hey, no problem if my mouth is a little off color and so is my humor. Hey, I just live by the grace of God.

Hey, wait a minute. Let me give you a warning. If that's your mentality, you're turning the grace of God into lewdness.

Oh, God's grace is there to forgive our stumblings into the most lewd of issues. But it's not there to validate lewdness, a way of life. Oh, God's grace is there to forgive every stumble.

But it's not there to presumptively create a walk that feeds the flesh and ignores the character of God. That's turning the grace of God into something it is not. A person who says, oh, you're being too uptight.

You're being legalistic. By God's grace, I just don't worry about those things. Then you're misunderstanding what the grace of God is all about.

The grace of God is here to make us more and more like Jesus Christ. Here to produce a fruitful life, good works and obedience. What you're doing is you're taking the word grace and letting your flesh make

provision for the lust thereof.

It's a deceit of the enemy. It's a deed of the flesh. It's not of the Spirit.

So we need that warning. Lord, help us. Don't let us turn the grace of our God into lewdness or lasciviousness or licentiousness.

Romans 6, 1 and 2 kind of build on that thought and really warn us against that licentious kind of thinking. Licentious related to the word license. You know, hey, grace, that's a license to sin, right? Not at all.

Romans 6, 1 and 2. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not. How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it when the grace of God is beginning to be heard and it's so astounding and free and broad? The perversion of the flesh wants to take it and the natural thinking of man is, oh my goodness, well, man, if sin abounded and then grace abounded where sin abounded, why don't we just continue in sin so we can provoke more grace? Hey, what a great way to get more grace. Shall we do that? Verse 2. Certainly not.

Absolutely no way. And the reason is this. How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? By the grace of God, we died with Jesus Christ on the cross.

And as disinterested as He is in sin, He wants us to more and more, by His grace, become disinterested in it, untouched by it. That's what the grace of God is for. Not for licentiousness.

Not a license to go out and violate the character of God and the will of God. The grace of God isn't a license to ungodliness. It's a means to godliness.

God protect us. And may God use us to help others not misunderstand, abuse, twist and turn and change. The grace of God.

It's so precious. It's so wonderful. Oh yes, if you've fallen, stumbled in a way that you don't think God can ever forgive you, listen, if your heart is broken and humble, before Him, God gives grace to the humble.

It's not that He can't forgive lewdness by His grace or a lewd act or word or thought. It's that we can't use His grace to validate that kind of lifestyle. May we not turn the grace of God into that which it is not.

Make it an excuse to walk in sinful indulgence. That's not what it's about. It's there as a power to deliver us from sinful indulgence.

Not an excuse to stay in sinful indulgence. See the difference? Major difference. God help us to understand the grace of God and not misuse it.

2 Corinthians 6 By the way, do you know those who want to take the grace of God and use it as a cover for lewdness or an excuse for more indulgence? Do you know what? They throw themselves right back under the law of God. And at that point, they need not to hear more about the grace of God that they've abused and twisted. They need to hear more about the law of God that brings them to accountability.

Remember, 1 Timothy 1, 8 and 9. The law is for the rebellious, the insubordinate. God doesn't want us living under the law. His grace is there to redeem us from the law and to enable us to live more and more up to its holy standards.

But if we abuse, reject, twist, mistreat the grace of God, we're walking according to the flesh. The inference from Galatians 5, 18 is we put ourselves back under the law practically speaking. Not concerning salvation, not concerning eternal life, but in our fellowship, our relationship, our walk with the Lord.

In other words, we're saying, God, please admonish me, rebuke me, scold me, spank me, put me in your corner. And I don't mean time out. I mean chastisement.

The law is for the rebellious. 2 Corinthians 6, 1 and 2. Another warning about the grace of God. We then as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

For He says, In an acceptable time I have heard you and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.

Verse 1 reminds us that you and I, children of God, we are workers together with the Lord. As workers together with Him. Many of us have only thought about being workers together with each other for God.

Actually we are workers together with Him. It's a wonderful thing to want to work for God. It's a glorious thing though to learn to work with God.

Wanting to work for God just shows devotion, zeal and desire. Learning to work with God shows wisdom and insight into the need for the grace of God to make an effective worker. See, Christ lives in us.

He walks with us. We are workers together with Him. We are partners with God.

Christ lives in us. And as the Father did great works through the Son, so now the Son wants to do great works through us. We want to learn to be workers together with God.

That's where the power is. That's where the fruit comes from. That's where there is victorious ministry.

That's where lives are effected. It's not me touching you. It's God touching you through me.

And vice versa. Workers together with God. And as workers together with God, God pleads with us through the Apostle not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Because the grace of God is critical in working together with Him. It's what God uses to make our lives useful and fruitful. We must not receive His grace in vain.

That is, we must not acknowledge it and then accept it but for less than and other than it is intended. Especially here is a warning not to ignore the grace of God in growth, service, and sanctification. If you and I think the grace of God is only for forgiveness, in that sense we're receiving it in vain.

Not that we won't find forgiveness, but we're not receiving His grace for all the reasons it was intended. We're receiving it for less than it was intended. If we think God's grace is only for justifying people and not for sanctifying people, we're acknowledging it.

We're receiving it. It will work in our lives in those areas that we're counting on. But it's still partly in vain.

Partly futile. That is, partly less than the reason the grace was given. The grace of God is given not only to justify us but to sanctify us.

And if we receive the grace of God only to forgive us and cover our sin when we stumble as a Christian, but we don't receive that grace to transform us and make us less likely to stumble in the future because we're growing in the grace of God, then we're receiving the grace of God partly in vain. Partly less than it was intended in our lives. We are workers together with God, so God pleads with us, don't receive my grace in vain.

The interesting quote here in verse 2, for he says, for God says, in an acceptable time I've heard you, the day of salvation I helped you, is the Father answering the Son, the Messiah, in a prophetic interaction in Isaiah. Isaiah 49, verse 8. We read that and we're thinking of today is the day you need to be saved. Yeah.

Today is the day for people to be saved. But that's not what that chapter of Isaiah is talking about. This quote is about the Messiah going forth to offer salvation at the acceptable time.

And he announcing, behold, today is the day of salvation. The inference is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived out his ministry by depending on the grace of Father God. And didn't we see exactly that in a previous study? The relationship between the Father and the Son is like the relationship we're to have now with the Son.

The inference here is Jesus ministered by not receiving the grace of God in vain. You and I should do the same thing because we're workers together with God just the way the Son was with the Father. Do warnings about the grace of God fit in a message about the much more grace of God? Oh, absolutely.

To the extent we misunderstand the grace of God. To the extent that we miss the grace of God. To the extent that we misuse the grace of God.

We are missing out on the much more grace of God. We're into something else. Verbal gymnastics.

Mental gymnastics. Trying to make the things of God feed the desires of our flesh. We don't want to miss the much more grace of God and part of it are the gracious warnings God gives.

Don't change the grace of God. Don't abuse the grace of God. Don't receive it in vain.

Don't acknowledge it, accept it, but not let it have its full orb work in our lives. That brings us to consideration of the dimensions of God's grace. The more we see how large and great His grace is, oh, the more we'll want to be clear in our understanding and full in our appropriation of it.

The dimensions of God's grace. God's grace is the much more grace of God. It's so much more than we've ever thought it is.

May God stimulate our thinking now about His grace as we look at these verses. Increase our appetite for His grace. Let us realize we've only begun to partake of the grace of God.

Some might say, oh, I've just saturated my life with the grace of God. I don't know how I can go on any further with the grace of God. Well, listen.

If you have absorbed, drunk in 100,000 gallons of the grace of God, don't forget the ocean that it came from. We're just getting started. Ephesians 2.7 speaks in those terms, talking about God raising us up with Christ to this end, verse 7, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God has so much grace. In fact, He's exceedingly rich in His grace that He raised us up with Christ with this in mind, that in the ages to come, that would include the age we now live in, the millennial age yet to come for us, His people, and the new heaven and new earth, the everlasting age to follow. In those ages, God wants to show the exceeding riches of His grace.

How? In kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. We who are in Christ are now the objects of the kindness of God. And through that kindness, exercised toward us, displayed toward us, shown to us, He is expressing the exceeding riches of His grace.

From the day we're saved, through the ages on earth, now the church age, later the millennial age, the kingdom of God on earth, when Christ returns, through the age of the new heaven and new earth, eternal age, the Lord wants to show His grace by being kind to you and me. You ever think of yourself as an object of the kindness of God? You know, sometimes we forget, God is nice. He's very nice.

He's nice beyond description. And sure, it's right for Him to thunder from Mount Sinai, thou shalt and thou shalt not. Rebellious man needed to know how holy God was and how unholy we are.

But as Hebrews tells us, we haven't come to that mountain, we've come to Mount Zion, New Jerusalem, Heavenly Jerusalem. We've come not to relate through law, but through grace. We've come not to hear thunder and lightning describing our ungodliness and His holiness.

We've come broken, finding forgiveness in the blood of the Lamb. And now we have come to one who is a shepherd who picks us up like His sheep. God is nice.

He's kind. He's just good. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord.

Why? For He is good. How good? His loving kindness is everlasting. That phrase just rings time and time and time and time and time again in the Psalms.

It's like we need to hear it to get the point. How great the Lord is. How glorious.

The dimensions of His grace, they are exceedingly rich. You might say, well, God's lavished upon me millions of dollars of the riches of His grace. I just don't know if I need to or see if I can or is there any room to go any further? Listen.

He's got millions of billions, trillions of dollars of grace left just for you. He'll be spending it on you throughout eternity, the exceeding riches of His grace. And He's willing to be doing that right now.

The same God we'll live with forever is the God we know now. This exceeding riches of His grace, we can walk in it now. Oh, may God build our appetite for His grace, our comprehension of His grace and our faith in His grace and our humble sense of need for that kind of grace.

We're talking oceans of grace. We're talking World Bank treasuries of grace. Grace upon grace.

I love that phrase, the exceeding riches of His grace. Oh, Lord, just lavish it upon us for Your glory, for Your namesake, for the changing of our lives, for the touching of other lives, for the building of Your church. That's what it's there for, the exceeding riches of His grace.

Ephesians 3.8, another wonderful picture in words of the dimensions of God's grace. To me who am less than, the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the

unsearchable riches of Christ. God gave grace to the Apostle Paul and then sent him out to preach the grace of Jesus Christ.

And here he calls it the unsearchable riches of Christ. Some translations rightly, appropriately translate that the unfathomable riches of Christ. Some seeing the grace of God as an ocean might think, oh, I've gone miles deep into that grace.

Oh, it's glorious, but I think I've about bottomed out. Oh, hold on. This ocean of grace is unfathomable.

You can't measure. You can't measure the fathoms down until you hit bottom. The unsearchable riches of Christ.

There's no end to them because they flow out of the infinite heart of our infinite Lord God. The dimensions of His grace, exceedingly rich, unsearchable, unfathomable. Lots of room in there for us to keep diving deeper, deeper, drawing on more and more.

Now in conclusion, let's reflect a bit on all of this, looking at 1 Peter 4.10. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. One phrase in this verse relates back to the previous heading, the dimensions of God's grace. Let's tuck it in there and then consider in conclusion this other issue in this verse.

The manifold grace of God. That speaks of the dimensions of God's grace. God's grace is manifold.

Many faceted. After you've seen one aspect of it and then another and another and another and another, it's like how much more can there be? How many different ways can God's grace be seen and known and understood and walked in? Well, it's manifold. It's like a diamond.

Every new stance you take to look at it, you can get a new reflection of beauty, a new facet shining forth. But that's a meager comparison because it doesn't take you forever to see every facet on a diamond, even a very impressive diamond. But the many faceted aspects of the grace of God, the manifold grace of God, just goes on and on.

Grace for forgiveness. Grace to grow up. Grace for service.

Grace for fruit. Grace for obedience. Grace for victory.

Grace for wisdom and insight. Grace in relating to people. Grace for ministering to the family.

Grace on the job. Grace at church. Grace applied to new problems we never ran into before.

We're talking about the manifold grace of God. We can just keep learning about why it's there and how it works in our lives. But for a conclusion, here is the point.

We are called to be good stewards of the grace of God. As each one has received a gift, that is the gifts of service by God's grace, let's serve it out to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If you've been a Christian very long, you're probably aware of Christian stewardship.

I don't know how many years I was growing an appreciation of being a steward and never realized that we have a stewardship of the grace of God. See, a steward is one who is accountable to use the resources of the Master for the will of the Master and the glory of the Master and the work of the Master. Our Lord God

is a God of grace.

We are stewards of the manifold grace of God. We're not just stewards of our resources, stewards of our time, stewards of our gifts. We're stewards of all the grace of God.

In many ways, you could say one of the highest stewardships we're called to is stewardship of the grace of God. We're accountable to God to use His grace for His glory, His will, and His work. And as we plunge into the grace of God, it's not, Oh good, I can't wait to just dump the goodies all over me.

Oh God will dump plenty goodies, heavenly ones, all over us. But that's not our motivation. That's not our focus.

This grace we're plunging into, we have a stewardship there. Lord, I'm accountable to You for all this grace You've offered. Accountable to walk in it.

Accountable to receive it and draw on it. Accountable to contend for it. Accountable to serve it out to others.

I'm answerable to You to use it for Your glory, Your work, and Your will. Puts a big dimension on stewardship, doesn't it? Stewards of the manifold grace of God. You know, for all of this, we need something desperately that's mentioned in Hebrews 4.16. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Do you ever run into times of need? Do you ever run out of times of need? That might be easier to answer. Everywhere I turn, it seems like there's a time of need there. What are we to do with that? Well, there is a throne that rules the universe.

And it's characterized here as the throne of grace. And by the grace of God, we may come boldly to that throne. Not irreverently.

Not self-righteously cocksure and flippant and casual with God. But nonetheless, boldly. Oh, humbly.

Oh, yes, worshipfully. Oh, yes, bowing down in the heart. But boldly.

This is our Father there sitting on that throne. And there we can obtain mercy. Not get what we deserve, but find grace.

Get the good things we don't deserve, including the help we desperately need so often. Grace to help in time of need. For all of the things we've looked at in growing in the grace of God, let's just keep going to that throne of grace.

Getting more and more grace to help in time of need. And then last, 2 Peter 3.18, but grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the grace of God, may we have a yearning, a passion to keep growing in the grace of God.

And through the knowledge of that grace and the work of that grace, get to know our God better and better. And be better and better stewards of the manifold grace of God. Let's pray together.

Father, we give you glory for your great grace. We magnify your name. You are a gracious God, abundant, exceedingly rich in grace.

Thank you for your saving grace, your justifying grace. Teach us more and more about your sanctifying grace and serving grace. Grace for victory.

Grace for being changed and for touching lives. Guard and protect us from abusing, misunderstanding, underusing or misusing the grace of God. Make us good stewards of it, Lord.

May it bring honor to your name, life to your church, and salvation to the lost, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

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