**The Facet of Grace Orientation – BD10-01**

We want to mention now that we are back in this auditorium. Those of you who would like to bring your cassette recorders to make any copies of the Bible studies are welcome to do so. The tape room is up these stairs here, the first room. All you have to do, as a matter of fact, is go up to the room after the service. Larry is up there. Just check on the form the tapes that you want and he’ll see that they are delivered to you. You are welcome to use these. There’s no charge for these. You may keep them or you may return them. We just want you to use the Word in any way that you find useful and that the Lord lays upon your heart.

Shall we bow in a Word of prayer? “Our heavenly Father, we ask thee now to guide us in these moments that we gather about thy Word that thou will give us guidance and understanding and open our hearts that God the Holy Spirit may glorify thy Son and use these things to the building up of an edification within our own souls. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

We are studying now in this basic doctrine series. We have come to the point where we are considering what it is to be a mature Christian. We have come to the basic first quality which is understanding the grace of God. If you have missed the first one, you’re going to be in a little bit of a problem this morning because there’s some background material that has eluded you. Sometimes people feel that things go by so fast in our services that you don’t understand what we’re talking about or some of the things that are being said. But you must understand that there is background material that has been given and if you stay with us long enough you will in time have these things reiterated and re-explained, and you will get the picture. However, if you take advantage of the tapes that are available, you may very readily, while you’re driving along in your car or some other way, catch up on the things that you missed.

So we’re talking about what the Bible calls edification, a structure of spiritual maturity in your soul. Believers are the target in this age of grace of all of Satan’s attack. Every satanic device, all the wiles of the devil are directed against you as a Christian as once they were directed against Jesus Christ who is no longer available to that attack, being seated to the right of the Father in heaven.

Now the only defense that you and I have against this satanic attack and all of its subtleties is the defense that comes from building a structure of spiritual maturity within our souls—this structure with all of its various facets, the foundation of which is a grasp of Bible doctrine, of divine viewpoint, of what the Bible teaches, of God’s principals, His ways. That’s why the local church is important because the local church is the place that God has designed to be the dispensary of Bible doctrine. It is your business to get it in one way or another. It is your business first of all to go to a church where you can get it. It is your business to avoid a church where you are given inspiration.

There is a considerable debate and a rising tide of conflict even within conservative seminaries on the issue that we here at Berean faced 20 years ago: What is a local church all about? I spent one year out of Dallas seminary following what preachers are supposed to do; knocking on doors; appealing to indifferent adults; going through all the motions of church techniques and devices; and, using the principals of Christian education that appeal to the lust patterns of people to make them feel they have a place in the sun and to attract them in other ways than the Word of God.

After one year of that, I sat down in this modest little town in which we lived in at the time. Irving, now has almost 100,000 people, but at the time 2,500 people, and three horses. And I said if God gives me 25, 30, or 40 years in the ministry, what will I have out of this kind of ridiculous procedure? And it struck me then that the way that you appeal to people in the first place, the way you draw them into a church operation in the first place, is the way they will continue. If you meet them at the door with a greased palm, “Hail fellow well met,” and a complimentary, “You’re a wonderful wonderful person” type of routine, then that’s the dose you’re going to have to keep giving them every time they show up if you expect them to keep coming back, except that the shot has to get bigger and bigger and bigger until it’s so monstrous that you can’t produce it.

So we have the site and the spectacle of pastors who are running around doing all kinds of things except preparing the word and dispensing the Word because the local church has imposed some stereotype ideas of what the preacher is supposed to be, all of which violate his call by scriptural patterns. Now (we are faced with) this problem, this business of the local church being a place of inspiration. This is the easy way out, by the way.

When you hear a preacher get up and you can’t say, “He has actually explained the Word to me,” (you don’t have anything). (If instead you have to say,) “He’s given me a lot of inspiration. He has talked in a mellifluous voice and he has made very moving statements and they’ve been very beautiful and he’s quite an orator in his approach, and he has made a few points, but basically I’ve been inspired,” you don’t have anything. That inspiration is going to drip out of you like a hole in a sack of flour before Monday morning rolls around. You have been conned.

Now it is your business to see to it that you do not put yourself under a preaching ministry that gives you inspiration as the diet rather than exposition. There is even in seminary circles now a great conflict rising because seminaries tend to prepare men to be professionals in the ministry; the kind of boys who never dirty their hands; the kind of boys who walk out and there are certain things they wouldn’t do because they’re preachers; and, that they wouldn’t jump in and produce because it needs to be done. We’re having a professional view of the ministry which is casting a sweetness and light flavor upon people, and it builds big congregations, and these are equated with accomplishing spiritual results and success in the Lord’s work. This is going to come increasingly to a head.

I was looking over a little brochure we wrote 20 years ago in which we were trying to lay out in this modest little city what was the difference about Berean Memorial Church, and we had come to a distinctively different concept about what the local church was all about, and there wasn’t another church in the city that had this concept, and all of the other places, as a matter of fact, were strongly antagonistic to it. Because once you accept the idea that the local church is a place to explain the Word of God, that puts the preacher on the hot seat. That means he has to study. That means he has to know his business. That means he has to do the hardest kind of preaching. That means the greatest demand of productivity on his part.

It sure is nice to visit people and to chit-chat with them and to eat their cookies and to drink their tea and to socialize and to make them feel that he’s a really wonderful pastor. But this issues is coming to a head. More and more there are young men who are rising up in the ministry who I’ve discovered were just as smart as I was. And they’re through playing games, and they’re not going to invest their lives in what seminaries often train you to invest their life in. They’re going to be, in the Lewis Sperry Chafer tremendous tradition, expositors of the Word of God. No gimmickry. No conning techniques. Dr. Chafer used to tell us in class, “I’ve called you men into this seminary. God has brought you to this seminary for one purpose, and that is to teach you Word of God. And I’ll tell you one thing, that after I am dead, you do not have something to preach, that is the doctrine of the Word of God, I will turn over in my grave. And he had the right idea. He got the right concept as to what men were to be trained to do and he produced a school to do it.

Now you’re going to have to decide what kind of a church you want to go to. You’re going to have to tell your friends about this. All of these people who are in the circle of your acquaintance who are drifting around, who are desperate for a real relationship to God, who are drifting off into the emotionalism of the tongues movement, or who are being subjective in their receptivity to the Word of God. The person who sits in church and says, “I don’t like the preacher. I don’t like the way he says it. I don’t like his personality.” What does that have to do with the Word of God? You listen to people who object to something you’ve heard a minister say, how often they don’t say, “Now you see here’s what he said but here’s what the Word of God said.” That’s how the Bereans of old did. What they say is, “Here’s what he said but he’s so arrogant. He thinks he’s God. Who does he think he is? Just look at him. Listen to the way he talks.” And they attack everything except the fact of was he wrong or was he right.

Now when you have developed some grace orientation, which is what we’re talking about this morning, you’re going to be objective. You’re going to sit right there and you’re going to be just as relaxed when the Word of God is laid out as you can be no matter who does it. I don’t care if it’s Buddy Rouch up here. You’re going to be relaxed and receptive to it. It doesn’t make any difference once you get grace-oriented because then you’re objective. Is it the truth or is it not the truth.

So you keep your ears open. You’re going to hear some interesting things because there are some young men who are getting fed up and who have been fortunate to be in churches that are oriented to what the local church ministry should be. It has one business: to give you enough Bible doctrine right information that you can become a spiritually mature Christian. The first step is orientation to God’s grace.

So we learned last week from 2 Corinthians 5:17 that Christians are a beautiful new breed in God’s order of creation. There’s a result of the grace of God. The exercise of God’s grace toward us depends only on who and what God is. It is His being true to His own essence and it has nothing to do with us. Grace is the favor that God is now free to bestow because of what Christ did on the cross, to free God to do this toward us. If you are disoriented to the grace of God, my dear friend, you are going to have a disastrous Christian life because this is the key to living, to be oriented to grace.

Paul in Galatians 5:4 says, “Christ is become of no effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.” And there are a lot of Christians in good evangelical churches because they never learned it in the first place. In Hebrews 12:15, we read, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and by it many be defiled.”

So this morning we move on from the fact that we are a new breed created by the grace of God to defining grace orientation. By this we mean knowing what your role is in the plan of God. Paul was the apostle distinctively of the grace of God. In his experience he was well aware of the contrast between what he deserved and what God’s treatment of him was.

In writing to his young protégé Timothy, in 1 Timothy 1:14-15, Paul says, “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.” There wasn’t any doubt in Paul’s mind as to how he stood and what he deserved. Furthermore, Paul was well aware of the fact that he was nothing, and this is a basic step toward becoming grace oriented.

In 1 Corinthians 15:10, we read, “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon 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.” Hebrews 12:15 says, “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God.” Now you’re in Paul’s place. You’ve been called into grace. You are what you are by the grace of God, but you had better look diligently lest this beautiful positon of freedom and liberty to which you have been called and in which you stand should be one that you desert.

So it was that Paul could say (this apostle of the grace of God who knew what he was and knew what he deserved) in Galatians 2:20, in the last part of that verse, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Everything he was because of God’s grace. So all we are, all we do is solely by the grace of God. This covers your health. This covers your mind. This covers your ability, your appearance, your skills, your possessions, and your visions, and God alone gets the thanks. God alone gets the credit for our divine good production.

Now there are certain things which will destroy your feeling for grace. There is a pride within us that expresses itself in certain ways that destroy grace, and it’s a sign that you’re not oriented to grace. If anybody here this morning rejects eternal security. If anybody in this auditorium here says, “I don’t think that once I become a Christian that I’m certain that I’ll go to heaven, that I’ll always be a Christian. There’s a hellish nightmare that a lot of Christians are taught to go through by which they wake up every morning and they never know whether they’re going to make it through that day safely enough to still be going to heaven. Vast numbers of churches teach their people that the minute they don’t behave themselves they’re headed for hell once more. This is the person who thinks that his sins are greater than God’s provision through Jesus Christ, and that’s pride. If you’re so overwhelmingly proud that you think that your sins are bigger than God’s plan, you have another thing coming.

Another destruction of orientation to God’s grace is the Christian who breaks down under the pressure of trials—the Christian who thinks his troubles are greater than God’s provision. God says that he doesn’t bring any trial, any temptation into your life that is greater than you can bear, and He provides a way out. We’ve got some proud Christians running around who like to whine and bemoan the trials and the pressures and the difficulties that come into their lives because they think God has gotten mixed up and been unfair and unkind and made a mistake in bringing this upon them, after they’ve prayed so much and they’ve done so much. We also have Christians whose pride leads them to produce a false spirituality. They think that their works of human good, their morality, their taboos, their personality and habit changes are all better than the plan of God, and that’s a false spirituality. It’s your pride that makes you walk around with that attitude.

We’ve got some Christians who run around and every time they see somebody with a little flare in their pants at the bottom they get a ruler out to measure it, and beyond a certain point this guy’s in trouble. If you’re running around measuring the flare on the bottom of trousers you’re not oriented to grace, and you had better measure the flare between your ears because something is out of order.

We’ve got these Christians who are guided by their emotions too. They think that how they feel about something is a better guide than doctrine. You know how it is. You’ve talked to these people too. You’ve explained to them what God as said from their book and they say, “Well, I don’t know. I just feel this way about it.” Who cares what you feel about it? Is your feeling more accurate than what God has said? So you’ve got all these do-gooders in the world because they’re operating on their feelings—what they call love. They’re the most misguided characters on the subject of love and on the subject of emotions. It’s because they’re disoriented to grace. It’s a subtle pride that really works within their being.

You have some beautiful examples in the Bible of people who are disoriented to grace. God even warned His people Israel in the Old Testament, and they lived under the law. Yet God treated them in grace and He warned them about forgetting about the grace of God. In Deuteronomy chapter 8 beginning at verse 11, God warned them through Moses, “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God in not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I command you this day, lest when thou hast eaten and art full and has built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and thy flocks multiple, and thy silver and thy gold are multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the Lord thy God who brought thee for the out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought where there was no water, who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint, who fed thee in the wilderness with manna which thy fathers knew not that He might humble thee and that He might test thee to do thee good at thou latter end, and thou say in thine heart, ‘My power and the might of mine hand have gotten me this wealth.’”

Now God says don’t you do that because that is disorientation to the grace of God. Instead, verse 18 says, “But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God for it is He who giveth thee power to get well, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto thy fathers as it is this day.” You and I are nothing, and God is everything. Whatever position and whatever satisfactions you possess, it’s because God’s grace has given these to you.

In Matthew 26:33 you have the example of disorientation to grace on the part of Peter. Matthew 26:33 says, “Peter answered and said unto Him (to the Lord), ‘Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.’” Now Peter was confident of his reliability and of his devotion to the Lord. And because he lacked grace orientation he was preoccupied with what he could do, and how great was his sincerity.

There is a godly sincerity that the Bible speaks of, but there is an ungodly sincerity which is usually a cover-up for people who don’t know the Word. So they make up with inspiration. Now Peter had probably just attended some … service where they were all singing around the strumming guitar, and they all got to feeling really good. And Peter says, “You know I can just really conquer the world for you Lord.” And he was so disoriented to the grace of God that he was sure that whatever else the rest of the disciples would do, he’d stand. And he was the greatest failure of all. If he had been oriented to the grace of God, he would not have been trying to dissuade the Lord from the cross. He would have realized that Jesus neither needed his help nor his hindrance in performing his mission.

The Lord Jesus Christ was an example of a person who did have orientation to grace in His humanity. And he built this orientation to the grace of God the same way you and I have to build it (Luke 2:40). That is through the doctrine of the world. The Bible says, “And the child Jesus grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom (that’s doctrine), and the grace of God was upon Him.” He recognized His father’s provision, Hebrews 10:5 tells us. He recognized and respected the Father’s will (Hebrews 10:7). When He was on the cross (Luke 23:34), He prayed for His enemies.

Certainly you remember Stephen and the grace of God. Here was a man dying an unjust death at the hands of religious people. As His soul and spirit left his body and went into the Lord’s presence, Acts 7:60 says, “He kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, ‘Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.’ And when he had said this he fell asleep.” Stephen went out of this life in a magnificent explosion in the glory of the grace of God.

**Romans 8:28**

Well how do you develop grace orientation? Please turn to Romans 8:28. Many of you have liked to quote this verse. Let’s take a look at it a little more in detail. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” “We know” is the Greek word “oida.” It is in the perfect tense but it is used as the present tense, meaning that here is something currently that we possess in the way of knowledge as Christians. That that we possess is the knowledge of doctrine. It is in the active voice which means that Christians secure this doctrine through their own positive response to what they hear. It is in the indicative mode because it’s indicating that doctrine is a real possession. It’s the truth.

It is ignorance of doctrine that covers ups worldly sincerity, and worldly sincerity is demonstrated by the cry for everybody to be more loving, and with emotionalism. The means to this kind of spiritual knowledge is that grace system for perceiving spiritual things that brings us to full knowledge so that truth is stored within our human spirit, and this we have for use in building spiritual maturity. This is the knowledge that includes the techniques of the Christian life.

If you are a functioning mature Christian, you’ll know that there are certain techniques by which you operate in your Christian life. If you don’t know these techniques, you’re not operating in the Christian life. For example, if you don’t know the technique of confession of sin, you can’t even begin operating as a Christian. That’s number one, the technique of confession of sin. There’s the technique of the filling of the Holy Spirit. If you don’t know how to be filled with the Holy Spirit by confessing every known sin so that you are a spiritual Christian, you’ll make no progress. And if you don’t practice the technique of confession, if you don’t practice the technique of the filling of the spirit, you’re in trouble. The technique of faith rest that we’ll be looking at in more detail. Dependence upon the plan of God and His movement through your life so you’re not forever maneuvering and being devious and running around.

People love to say to young people, “You’re going to have to decide what you want out of life. You have to decide what you want out of life.” Isn’t that cute. And the world says, “Oh beautiful. Beautiful. That’s what people should do. Decide what you want out of life.” When you get oriented and spiritually mature through the Word of God, then faith rest comes in, and you’re not running around making decisions and determining what you want out of life. But you’re saying, “God, what’s the next step.” And you won’t know any more what’s coming out of life for than the man in the moon does. All you’re going to know is what’s the next step. And God is going to unravel and it’s going to be an adventure all the way down the line.

It includes the technique of learning doctrine. If you are not learning doctrine in one way or another, as we talked about at the beginning, you are destroying any hope of progress in the Christian life. If you’re not occupied with Jesus Christ, your soul is not occupied with Jesus Christ (this is a basic technique), then you’re occupied with all kinds of trivia. You will someday (and those of you who are older perhaps have a little better chance than those who are younger) when we run your funeral service, you will be standing there while thinking this thing over while we’re running this service and saying, “Boy did I ever blow my life. As I look back now at what I have left, I just frittered away because I was occupied with myself, and I had so many things that I thought were so important for me to run around all day long. Nobody ever said to me, ‘Hey friend. Sit down and take yourself a pencil and start adding up in a week’s time (and determine) how much time is run on self-preoccupation, and how much time is spent preoccupation with Christ?’” That’s what you’re going to have left for eternity.

Now the Bible says we know. We Christians have a source of information and knowledge so we know certain things. “We know that all things,” and this expression refers to the variety of sufferings that come into a Christian’s experience. Now you may not deserve those sufferings, or you may deserve them. You may have brought them on yourself. But whether you do or not, what the cause is makes no difference in the results of this suffering, and do you know what it’s going to do? This suffering is all going to “work together.” “Work together” is kind of an interesting Greek word her, this “work together.” It’s “sunergeo.” “Sunergeo” means: This part, “ergeo” means “work,” and this part “sun” means “with” or “mix.” So that God takes everything in our lives and He mixes it together.

Now if you can imagine a lady baking a cake, and you imagine the most hideous abominable things that she could throw into that cake so that you’d look at it and you wouldn’t want to touch it and eat it with a ten foot pole. And yet somehow after she got through throwing all the tobacco sauce in, and the calf brains and the eggplant, out came the most beautiful delicious cake you’d ever eaten. Now that’s what God says he takes and he works together and he mixes it and out it comes as beautiful divine good.

Now just think for a moment what He is saying. This incidentally is only for this life. Revelation 21:4 tells us that there’s not going to be any sorrow, any griefs in heaven. So this is for time. And God says that He’s going to take all of your failures, He’s going to take all of your weaknesses, He’s going to take all of your negative volition, He’s going to take all of your slander, all of your immorality, all of your shortcomings, and He’s going to mix them together and He’s going to produce divine good. Because the word for “good” is this word in the Greek, “agathos,” and this is a good, a thing which is good in itself. It has value in itself, intrinsic value, like gold. Gold is good anywhere you find it. It has a value in itself. And this is the kind of thing that God produces that is good. Furthermore, this happens to be a word that indicates a result. All things work together to result in good. It is God’s good so it’s divine good.

All of these things, all of these trials, all of the things that constitute our experience produce divine good. Now how can that be? Because of the grace of God. It doesn’t matter who you are or why those things are there. It only depends on what God is. And God’s grace takes everything we experience and mixes it into a good result.

There is a grace factor in your Christian suffering. Your suffering combines with doctrinal understanding in your soul and it produces divine good. If doctrinal understanding is not there, your suffering will produce bitterness and you’ll end up out of fellowship. God makes the resulting good a blessing. This thing is a great blessing to us.

So here you have, of all things, God saying, “I’ll make your sufferings a blessing to you.” If your suffering is not a blessing to you, it’s because you’re out of the plan of God. This is a great thing that God should even bring suffering. In heaven there can be no suffering so He can’t show us how great is His grace and His love for us, but He does that now. It’s only possible now.

Now God’s plan is perfect, so it’s greater than any problem that comes into our life. There’s a solution for every trial when you’re ready to receive it. I’m glad to say that no matter how you mess up your life, I’ll tell you on the authority of this verse, that it’s going to come out good. Now hear it again. I don’t care how you mess up your life, or how you’ve messed up your life. Within this auditorium, there’s all the trains of human tragedy and human mess-up of one kind or another. All the things that you know that nobody else knows. But God says that no matter you mess up your life you can’t ultimately make it turn out bad. He’s going to take every rotten stinking bit of it, and He’s going to mix it together, and it’s going to be good that is good within itself because it’s divine good.

Now the connecting link between our trials and failures in this good is the knowledge of the Word of God. We know that all things, all the sufferings and experiences result in a good. And who are the recipients? “Them that love God…,” a certain group that loved God, that’s one. And then there are another (group of) recipients: “… them who are called.” And the grammar is such, again, that indicates that it’s talking about the same people. Them that love God, Christians who actively by their faith in Christ put themselves in the position where they love God.

How do you love God? Well you love God because of your position in Christ. Jesus Christ loves God and you are in Him. Therefore you love God. But you also love God as a result of doctrine. Doctrine develops love in your being so you love God in your experience.

Remember that in Matthew 18:21, this same Peter that we’ve been talking about asks the Lord how often he should forgive people who did him wrong. The Lord’s answer was no limitation. 1 John 1:9 which is the key to forgiveness for our sins in our practice puts on limitations. Psalm 78:39-40 tells about how God in the Old Testament had no limitations on His grace.

Now Peter matured spiritually in time. As he went through his own life he learned better from his early days, and the result was that he gives us that climactic advice in 2 Peter 3:18, “But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” “But grow in grace.” How do you grow in grace? Through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So we’re back again to something that we know. Doctrine in our human spirits is converted into grace. Peter did grow in grace. How did he grow? Well this verse that we teach our children tells us. 1 Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word that ye may grow on it.” That’s how he grew and developed spiritually.

Now Peter lays aside all of the things, he says, that are opposed to grace orientation in 1 Peter 2:1. “Wherefore laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil speakings. Any of these things that hinder our growth in grace, Peter says, put them aside. Use the correct technique of confession. Use the technique of grace perception. God’s provision is ready to build this structure of maturity.

You know the story in Matthew 18:23-27 about the king who had a servant who owed him a large sum of money: 10,000 talents, which amounts in our money to $10 million. He couldn’t pay so the king forgave him. Now the parable tells us a story. The king is God. All men are born with sins, with a debt that we cannot pay. Only Jesus Christ was freeborn. He died spiritually for us and paid the price. This servant who had been forgiven $10 million had another fellow servant who owed him money. He owed him a very small sum, 200 denarii which amounted to $20, and he asked him to pay this debt. When the man said, “Would you give me a little time?” he threw him into prison. This is a beautiful example of the lack of grace orientation. This man who had bene forgiven $10 million wouldn’t give $20 in somebody else.

If you and I do not deliver unlimited forgiveness to those who offend us, God will call us up to account. A graceless mental attitude is going to bring discipline into your life every time. The discipline is going to continue and the pressure is going to mount until we confess and until we extend forgiveness.

Orientation to the grace of God. There are a few ways to demonstrate it as we tie this up. Our orientation to the grace of God is going to be evidenced to people. James and John in Luke 9:51-56 are with the Lord in Samaria. They observe the disrespectful attitude of the Samaritans toward the Lord, so they asked the Lord whether they shouldn’t call down fire from heaven to destroy these people. Now that’s not being grace-oriented.

But these men knew the Scriptures. They knew that in 2 Kings 1:9-12 there is the story of how Elijah brought down upon the soldiers of King Ahaziah this kind of destruction from heaven. Now why was it alright for Elijah to do that and not for them to call that down upon these Samaritans? Because it’s a different age. It’s a different ball game. In the age of law everything was just and the decisions and the punishments were swift. But today grace orientation means knowing that God works in a different way. Jesus Christ brought us grace and truth.

So you go through the Scriptures and you learn that Peter progressed above all the other disciples from this position where he was a very graceless person, and we’re encouraged by the fact that he progressed so we can progress. He progressed in his salvation toward being grace in his security and in his contact with God.

In the Old Testament the Jews had the Urim and the Thummin which was a system of flashing lights on the breastplate of the high priest, and God gave his will in that way. You and I as Christians have a guidance system that is much superior, but if we’re not oriented to grace, that guidance system breaks down for our understanding of the mind of God. Peter’s advice was to gird up our loins like a fisherman and pursue the grace of God. Hebrews 13:9 says that it is a good thing to be oriented to the grace of God, and it is basic to serving Him.

So how do you and I know how we stand on our own grace orientation facet? How far have you matured in grace? Here are some ideas to give you some guidance: Ask yourself, do you understand the principal of grace from the word of God? Do you grasp the principal of grace and what that means? That it has freedom within the restrictions of the Word of God. Romans 4:3 says, “For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. And to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of death. But to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Then in Romans 11:6, we read, “And if by grace then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work.” First of all, do you know the principal of what it is to operate by grace, what God means by grace?

Secondly, are you applying grace to the maximum in your experience? That is, is it a way of life with you? 2 Corinthians 1:12 says, “For our rejoicing is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God we have behaved ourselves in the Word, and more in the world and more abundantly toward you? Are you applying grace in your experience? Is it a way of life with you? Do you live by grace? You can tell. You can examine and evaluate yourself.

And then do you continue to grow in grace as 2 Peter 3:18 tells us to grow in grace? Now it doesn’t mean that you’ll never fail in grace again. There will be times when you will fail. Paul writes in Galatians 2:11, “But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed for before certain men came from James he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them who were of the circumcision.” Here’s Peter who tells us to grow in grace, who made great strides in grace, and he breaks down all over again.

But do you grow in grace? Are you every year, day-by-day, becoming more relaxed, more at ease, more confident in what God is doing for you and not what you’re doing for Him.

You may test your grace orientation if you recognize that you are the products of God’s grace. If you have some delusions about what makes you so great, you’re not grace-oriented (1 Corinthians 15:10). You can test yourself as to whether you ignore the grace principal (2 Corinthians 6:1). There are a lot of Christians who haven’t learned to live and let live. Those are the people who are weak on grace.

Does your grace overflow into the lives of others? 2 Corinthians 8:7 tells about the grace of giving and how it overflowed into the lives of Christians who were in need. And when people come up against you, do they feel that you’re operating on grace toward them? There are some people that you’re with, and I’ve had many Christians say this to me. They describe some oppressive situation out of which they have come. Sometimes it’s a church. And they just tell me how miserable and how ill-at-ease they were. I’ve had people tell me they visited this family, and “They are so legalistic. They are so disoriented to grace that it was just terribly uncomfortable to be around them.”

I had one man tell me that “I worked in this place for a while. It was a school. And they were so legalistic that I felt guilty I turned my television set on.” One of our missionaries told about walking down the mission compound with his television set in his hand, and some of his missionary friends were standing out on the front steps on the door were yelling, “Hey, sin. Bad. Devil.” And there are some people, you’re just miserable around them because they’re not grace-oriented.

You can test yourself as to whether you reflect God’s grace to His glory and not abusing your liberty (Ephesians 1:6). You demonstrate it to the world (Ephesians 2:7). Your speech is seasoned with grace (Ephesians 4:7, 29). You treat others in grace, especially those who deserve it the least (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13b). You pray confidently because you are grace-oriented (Hebrews 4:16). You don’t become bitter (Hebrews 12:15). Best of all, you’re a stable person (1 Peter 5:12). You can examine your life. You can see where you stand in reference to the orientation of the grace of God.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971