

**Alpha  
to  
Omega**  
**A - Ω**

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## INTRODUCTORY STUDY.

## BEGINNING IN GRACE.

### 1. The Alpha and the Omega. Rev. 1:8.

(1) *The First and the Last* letters of the greek alphabet, meaning the beginning and the end, Rev. 21:5ff, 22:13. If these letters represent the Hebrew - **Aleph, Tau** - then it does not simply mean the beginning and the end, but also all of what is in between.

This is a description of the Lord, God, the Almighty, as being eternal. He is before all things and nothing survives him. He is sovereign of all his creation. This is amplified in Isaiah 44:6, 44:2, Exod. 3:14.

The sovereign Lord has always been, and as personal Creator, he is Lord of all that takes place in the course of history, including the redemption of the entire creation.

(2) *The God of all grace* is the Lord of all history. In Rev.1:4 he bestows grace. I Peter 5:10 calls him "the God of all grace". This grace is not a "thing", but is personal, Titus 2:11.

The thesis of these studies is that from beginning to end, all that God does flows from his pure grace; as he is, as he wills, as he creates, as he sustains, as he redeems, as he judges and as he finalises his creation.

(3) *God's grace is his holy love in action* Without giving a detailed definition of grace at this stage, we can say that in the OT, grace is God's "loving kindness" ('*chen*' and '*chesed*'), eg. Exod. 33:13, 32:5, Jer. 31:3. In the NT, the word '*charis*' is God's favour, his kindness and love in action, and relates to his whole action in

history. It is God loving freely, (cf. Hos. 14:4) unconditionally, gift wise, Romans 6:23.

One point we wish to emphasise is that in no way did God become gracious (in order to rectify the fall!). From eternity, he has been the gracious God. II Tim. 1:9.

## 2. Creation & Grace

(1) *Creation originates in grace.* Eph. 1: 3 - 10 tells us that God willed creation before the foundation of the world. V.4, cf. II Tim. 1:8, where God's purpose is linked with his grace which "he gave us in Christ ages ago", i.e. "before eternal times". (See also Tit. 1:2, Rom. 16:25) Thus at the beginning of all things stands the will of God which, in Christ Jesus, and with a view to him, desired the coming into being of the universe, and in that universe, man in fellowship with himself as his sons.

God's intention is to display his grace, v.6, which is his glory, and the expression of his Fatherhood, v.17.

(2) *Creation is God's gift.* We mean that God was not bound to create, as though there was some deficiency in him. Rom. 11:35f, Acts 17:24f, 28. Created life is from his grace (cf. Gen. 2:7, Jer. 2:13) and that life is sustained by the providential grace of God. (eg. Ps. 104:29-30, Matt. Col. 1: 17, etc).

(3) *There is no dualism in or behind creation.* Creation originates in grace. There is no primal evil. Creation of all things is through the gracious Godhead. (I Cor 8:6) Thus creation did not come from opposing forces, impersonal chance or fate, as there is no independent reality outside of "the God of all grace".

Evil is a parasite - irrational and inexplicable.

## 3. The Gracious Creation.

(1) *Creation is purposive.* Is. 14:26f, 46:9-11, 45:18, Eph. 1:3-10, Heb. 2:10, Matt. 19:28, II Peter 3:13, etc. It is not fragmentary and therefore meaningless. Each part is created for a reason and all has to do with purpose and the displaying of grace in time and in eternity. Prov. 16:4.

(2) *Creation is a harmony.* This is seen in the progressive stages of creation in Genesis 1, where it is said the "Lord saw it was good". The culmination and climax of creation is man, and then it is said to be "very good", Gen. 1:26-31. A functional harmony, unity, every part interrelated, in symphony, a display of grace.

(3) *The gracious creation.* The creation reflects the glory and grace of the gracious creator. Isa. 6:3, Ps. 19, Rom. 1:19. In Psalm 33:5 it says, "The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord." Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, "He has made everything beautiful in its time". The creation is an expression of grace and goodness. A God of grace (elegance, harmony, beauty, glory) creates a beautiful world that expresses his goodness.

## 4. The Man of Grace.

(1) *Man is created by "the grace of life"* (I Peter 3:7, Gen.2:7)

(2) *Created in the image and glory of God,* man is meant for grace and to express grace. (Gen. 1:26, I Cor. 11:7) Therefore he is at home and at peace only as he lives in grace, as he lives in the good of God's gift of life. In grace he will relate to the gracious creation, eg. I Tim. 4:1-4, 6:17. He will be gracious in his relationships, eg. I Cor. 13:4-7.

(3) *Beginning in grace.* From A - Z it is all grace. The rejection of a gracious God is what sin is. Its system of rewards, merits, pride, fear, etc., is foreign to the creation and against the nature of man. To flip back into grace comes by the action of God's grace, which came in Jesus Christ. Titus 2:11.

## GRACE AND JUSTIFICATION

### 1. Introduction.

The key passage for this study is Rom. 3:19-31 especially verses 23 and 24.

Man's loss of glory comes by his failure and refusal to live in dependency on God's grace. (Gen. 3:1ff) Rather, man attempts to "god" it - an illusion! — to be autonomous, to do it himself, make a name for himself, set up his own order, etc., etc. To move out of the relationship of grace brings to man the knowledge of his own evil with its guilt and shame, or loss of glory. To regain honour or glory, man sets up his systems of merit, reward, achievement, and he enters the life of religious bargaining, with its bondage.

Thus grace and gifts to man in this state are a mystery. Because he has rejected the nature of God, which is to give freely, man has to be acquisitive. He has to work hard to get what he can get. He has to secure himself against the universe and alien powers in it. He cannot believe that God is, simply, the giver.

To be justified is to be acquitted of all the guilt and judgment of the law. This freedom is the gift of grace. It is sin that pays wages, grace freely gives eternal life. Rom. 6:23. Guilty man will suspect and reject this. Grace must deal with this rejection by melting the stubborn heart.

### 2. The Grace of Law.

- (1) *The Law is the personal expression of God's character.*  
Various

Scriptures 'call it, "My law", "the law of the Lord", "his law", etc. We must not abstract it from the giver. The law expresses God's will for man, and that is gracious.

- (2) *The law is the embodiment of truth.* Romans 2:20. The law is the writing up in words of what is already written into the creation, eg. Rom. 2:14ff. Therefore it expresses grace - the grace which man, in his rebellion, represses. Rom. 1:18ff.
- (3) *The law can be summed up in love.* See Matt. 22:34-40, Rom. 13:8-10, Gal. 5:14. To love (i.e., be gracious to) is to obey the law. God's love is expressed in the law. The law, then, is for our good. (Rom. 7:12 c.f.- Ps. 147:19f, Ps. 1:1ff)

### 3. Obeying the Law.

- 1) *To obey is to live.* This is implied in the last note, but also amplified in such places as Luke 10:25-28, Deut. 30:12ff, Lev. 18:5, James 1:25, etc.
- 2) *Sin's deceitful use of the law.* Whereas the law of grace or the will of God was to be lived in dependence upon a gracious God (Ex. 20:1ff), sin uses the law against God and his neighbour to secure himself. Rom. 7:10f. Jesus speaks strongly against those who use the law to justify themselves. Lk16:15 Ironically, people do the same thing with their doctrine of the gospel of grace.

### 4. The Action of the Law.

Under this section our purpose is to see how law presses up on man who refuses grace.

- 1) *Law exposes sin.* Romans 3:20, 7:13, Gal. 3:19, James 1:22f. This would be the case of a person who committed themselves to obedience. If grace is not known or received, then there is no relief for the pain.
- 2) *The law provokes sin,* i.e. the guilt of law is the power for more sin. I Cor. 15:56, Rom. 7:5-8, 5:20, Heb. 2:14-15, I John 4:18

Guilt paralyzes obedience and inflames more sin.

- 3) *It brings torment.* In Gal. 3:10, it is the experience of the “curse”. Or in Rom. 4:15 it is the experience of God’s wrath against sin, experienced primarily in the conscience. From another angle, it is the pressure of sinful man living against grace.
- 4) *The law has a gracious goal.* It leads us to Christ. Gal. 3:22-24. It brings us to justification. cf. Gal. 2:19.

### 5. The Judgment of Grace.

This takes us back to Romans 3:23-25 where we see that justification must come by judgment. From our first study we can see that man’s choice against grace makes him deserving of judgment. We cannot come to freedom by escaping judgment, but through judgment.

The law demands judgment, as does the holiness of God and the conscience of man. here is a view which credits God with the attributes of holiness, righteousness and his right to be wrathful, but then sees God’s mercy and love triumph over his justice. his suggests conflict in God. Justification is not a fiat of God, nor God “allowing” man to get off the hook. Such views fly against the nature of creation, man and God.

(1) **We are redeemed (freed) by God’s propitiation.** Rom. 3:24,25, cf. I John 4:10. Grace comes to us personally in Jesus Christ. Titus 2:11, John 1:17f. To say that Christ died *for* our sins (vicariously) I Cor. 15:3, Rom. 5:8 must be interpreted in the light of his actually bearing our sins. John 1:29, I Peter 2:24. In suffering our sin, Jesus takes the “curse” (Gal. 3:13) which is the law slaying him (Gal. 2:19) By this we too are crucified, legally, in Christ. Gal.2:20, II Cor. 5:14, Christ takes the judgment of the world, John 12:31, I John 2:2, hence we pass through the judgment. John 5:24, Rom. 8:1-4.

(2) **Total grace equals total justification.** The law is fulfilled and upheld. Rom. 3:26, 31, 10:1ff. Grace triumphs over sin. (Rom. 5:20.) The triumph is full and final justification. It is received by faith, i.e., by grace, as a free gift. It frees from the law’s condemnation. We are returned to grace by grace, to live in grace.

## STUDY THREE

# THE GRACIOUS FATHER.

### 1. Our Father from Eternity.

This is the statement from Isaiah 63:16 where he is Redeemer-Father from of old. This is his Name, which speaks of a Father of grace (i.e., a gracious father is always seeking to redeem his children).

**1) God is essentially Father.** The following scriptures tell us this, I Cor. 8:6, Eph. 4:6, i.e., the Father is the one who has authority over his creation, because he authors it and he also relates intimately to his family. Jesus speaks of God as “Father, Lord of heaven and earth”, Matt. 11:25, He is “Our Father who art in heaven .... “

**2) Human fatherhood is derived from the Father.** See Eph. 3:14. We run into the difficulties of trying to see God’s love, or anger or Fatherhood as being like that of human beings, whereas it is the other way around. Many of us have poor and distorted images of Fatherhood, yet no human being is to take the place of God as Father. Matt.23:9.

**3) The gracious Father.** Jesus saw his ministry essentially as one in which he revealed God’s Name - and this is “Father” John 17:25-26, cf vs. 11 and 12. Jesus shows the splendour and glory of the Father (John 14:6-11) which is the revelation of grace and truth. John 1:16-18.

All that the Son does and says is. a revelation of the Father. Ephesians 1:2-10 speaks of the Father of luxurious grace, which

effects creation and is seen in his sons, who, together, are his family. We mean that “the God of all grace” (I Peter 5:16) is the Father-Creator, Father-Redeemer. Take away his Fatherhood (if we could) and God would not be God.

## 2. The Father’s Family.

1) **Man, created, is a son.** Luke 3:38 states that Adam was the Son of God. This is the identity of man and woman created in the image of God. Gen. 1:26, 5:1-2. Fatherhood is the basic relationship in the creation, and we see that the Father’s gracious purpose is to bring many sons to glory. Heb. 2:10, Eph. 1:5. In Acts 17:26-29 Paul teaches that rebellious man, by nature of his creation, is still a son, even though he has rejected the Father and abdicated his sonship. This is borne out in the parable of the father and his two sons in Luke 15:11-23. The following questions can be asked to clarify this:

- (a) Was the younger son a son of his father while in the far country?
- (b) Did he know his father as “father”?
- (c) Did he relate to him as a true son?
- (d) Did the father treat him as though nothing had happened?
- (e) Did the older brother know his father as a gracious father?
- (f) Did the elder brother treat the prodigal as his father had done?
- (g) Did the younger brother know grace in the end?
- (h) Did the older brother?

2) **Sons together make family.** Having one Father and being faithless to one another would be a contradiction. This is implied in Eph. 1:5, Mal. 2:10, cf. Is. 43:6-7.

The Father’s grace is seen in the familiness of the family. Eph. 4:1ff. Sonship by nature of the case, is not “me doing my thing”. The members of the family are not a mere aggregation of individuals, but members one of another. It is a family unified by grace and demonstrating the same. John 13:34f

3) **To reject the Father is to reject his grace** and to refuse our sonship. It is to refuse the family as well. We have already seen this in the prodigal son. Man must evolve new, false father figures - idols. cf.

Jer. 2:13,26ff,31, 3:9,13,14,19,29, Hence man’s guilt evokes his fear, and from his fear he hates the Father. (Jesus was crucified over Fatherhood, see especially in John’s gospel)

This not only makes man an alien in the creation but is the source of division, resentment, hatred and confusion in human relationships. To be ‘out’ with the Father is to be out with his family and to be out with the family means to be out with the Father. I John 4:21 - 5:2, cf. Rom. 1:1836, Gen. 4:1ff., eg., Cain hates Abel and murders him following the rift in his parents’ relationships. Gen. 3:12f.

Man’s anxieties, stress, guilts, many illnesses, grief, anguish, aloneness, perversions, come from a break in relationships.

## 3. The Reconciling Father.

- 1) Relationships are healed by forgiveness and reconciliation.
- 2) Reconciliation is all of grace - coming from the Father. Is.63:16, II Cor. 5:19, John 3:16, 5:30.
- 3) Jesus the true son shows the Father at work in him. John 5:17, 19, 20, 30.
- 4) The Son hears the enmity and hatred which we have for the Father Rom. 15:3, John 5:43, 15:23, Acts 2:23,36
- 5) The Father’s glory is sought by Jesus to accomplish the work of the cross. John 17:4-5. This is his redemptive grace.
- 6) The Son knows the anguish and lostness of the sons. Matt.27:46. This is the primal cry of man, which he bears to death and oblivion. cf. Is. 63:9, II Cor. 5:21 Having borne our evil and hate to extinction we are reconciled. II Cor. 5:19, Rom. 5:10.
- 7) Reconciled - Reconcilers. Because God has reconciled himself to us we are free to accept his grace and be reconciled to him and cry “Abba”. As we have been forgiven so we can forgive our brethren and receive their forgiveness. Hurts are held no more Resentments are dissolved. Suspicion expelled. Trust begins. This is all the work of the gracious Father.

## STUDY FOUR.

## THE NEW OBEDIENCE OF GRACE.

### 1. Introduction.

Grace has been minimised by many on the grounds that cheap grace breeds indifference and insularity. This is a deficient view of grace and one which Paul combated eg. Rom. 6:1ff. True grace is not cheap, but free. It does not dishonour the righteousness of God.

“But grace is love which passes beyond all claims to love. It is love which, after fulfilling the obligations imposed by law, has an unexhausted wealth of kindness. Grace floods with affection the sinner who has deserved anger and resentment, trust penitent treachery with a confidence which could not have been merited by ages of incorruptible fidelity, confers on a race which has been in revolt honours which no loyalty could have purchased, on the sinful joy beyond the deserts of saintliness.” (R.W.Dale *Lectures on Ephesians*. p. 178)

Grace is the dynamic of freedom and the fountain of obedience.

### 2. Grace Frees To Obey In Grace.

1) **We are the workmanship of grace.** See Eph. 2:8-10. Everything flows from grace. To be saved by grace is to be saved by faith. Since there is no merit on the part of the saved (how could there be?) grace is truly grace. To retain the illusion that man can do

something, even 1%, negates grace. (See Eph. 2: 1-9 and note the contrasts ).

We were so far gone that only great grace could renew us. This renewal is to God's true purpose for us, and the good works are not our creation, but God's (Titus 2:14, Col. 1:10). By grace we are restored to grace, and in that grace we are now constituted to obey, by grace.

2) **The power of grace for obedience.** Grace delivers from the lordship which sin obtains by reason of guilt. Rom. 6:14, cf I Cor. 15:56. With the brake off, the will is freed to yield to God in new obedience, Rom. 6: 11-14. Having died to the condemnation of the law (Rom. 7:1,4) we are freed now to bear fruit for God (Rom. 7:4-6) The law, like the husband, brings out evil fruit. Having died to the legal. fear of the law, we are made alive to a new world.

### 3) Examples.

Paul - Phil. 3:2-11. Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-10.

The woman caught in adultery - John 8:1-11

The woman who was a sinner - Luke 7:36-50

### 3. The New Heart.

The heart (the centre of the affections and the will) is stony and hard in its insubordination and irreverence. By cleansing it is renewed. Ez. 36:24-27, cf. I Cor. 6:11. This comes by the Holy Spirit applying to the conscience and heart the objective work of the judgment of the cross, so that it is known and experienced. Rom. 5:5ff says it is the love of the cross that is flooded into the heart by the Spirit.

We say in the second study that the law as the expression of God's mind, is summed up in love. This helps us understand that by the love of the Spirit the law of God is written *in* our hearts, Heb. 9: 14-18, cf. Jer. 31:31-34, bringing an obedience from the heart. Rom. 6:17. All this is the action of grace.

#### 4. The Obedience of Sonship.

To cry, "Abba" is by the Spirit, and it is with a delight to obey the Father. Rom. 8:14-17. By the Spirit our sonship is regenerated (this again by grace, John 3:1-16, Titus 3:4-7). There has been a whole change in attitude to the Father's authority so that obedience is no drag.

Jesus shows us the obedience of a true son (eg. John 5:17,19f, 30, 14:10). But it is axiomatic to see that Jesus' obedience is wrought in his dependency upon the Father, or by the power of the Holy Spirit. Matt. 12:28.

#### 5. By The Power Of Grace In Our Weakness

1) **Creationally man is dependent upon grace.** We saw this in the first study. Man is never called to be more than man. His attempt to be more than man was his rejection of grace. It is only in contingency upon God that man is strong. Jesus demonstrated this contingency.

2) **Redeemed man is also dependent upon grace,** Redeemed man has a new will to obedience through grace. In Rom. 7:14-25 Paul says that, of himself, sin is stronger than he, although he does not want sin. He insists that his will is not in sinning. Of himself he cannot beat evil or achieve good.

Sin still abounds - and grace superabounds. Hence the many exhortations in Scripture to "Stand fast in this grace".

Paul says that it is in weakness that he is strong in grace. II Cor. 12.

3) **All by the Spirit of grace.** The principle is in Galatians 5:16-25. The Spirit brings the life of grace and liberty. We are to walk in this life, i.e. in grace and liberty. By the grace of the Spirit, the harvest of the gospel or Christ is produced. To go back to law and self effort brings the curse of guilt. Gal. 3: 10ff. Being no longer under law, we will to obey and in the dynamic of grace, can obey. Grace continues to deal with failure in obedience, which in turn keeps us up to willing obedience. Christ gives his people gifts of grace for service and the

obedience of love. I. Cor. 4:7. Failure to obey comes primarily from a failure to live in grace. II Pet. 1:9, Rev. 2:1-7.

We are glorified progressively by the Spirit of freedom, II Cor. 5:17-18, and from great grace, life flows,. Acts 4:33.

## STUDY FIVE.

**THE GRACIOUS PEOPLE:****1. Radical Discipleship.**

(1) **It is all of grace.** This is Paul's boast in I Corinthians 15:10. Grace is the great surprise (eg., Matt. 20:1-16). It is contrary to all humanistic systems of religion and thought, and Paul states this when affirming that the message of grace which he preached would never have been the invention of man. (Gal. 1:11f) In answer to those who say, "It seems too good to be true", George McDonald says, "Anything that good must be true".

Paul has no time for false humility I Cor. 15:10. He does not presume on grace and yet all that he is and does flows from grace. This means we are not saved by grace and then have to complete it ourselves.

(2) **The gracious disciple.** The true disciple is not pre-occupied about his piety or her sacrifice. The disciple is not moving to do God's work, but God has moved to him, meaning that the radical disciple works from God. It is not so much imitation as habitation.

The disciple who knows grace is not having to succeed, nor does his/her obedience come from frenzied pressure. The God of all grace begets sons of grace. They are gracious. They display the powerful ease of grace in the things which they do.

**2. Gracious Relationships.**

1) *Accepting others as we have been accepted.* This means like Father,

like sons. Matt. 5:43-48. We no longer have to prove ourselves to others or to ourselves. (I. Cor. 4:1-5) As we have been forgiven of all the wrong we have made, so too we are free to forgive without making people "sweat it out". (Matt. 18:21-35) Because we have been justified we can admit when we have been wrong without need for rationalisation or passing the buck. We can *freely* forgive without the destructive self pity of holding on to our hurts. cf. I Cor. 13:4-7. This means flowing out in love to others without conditions laid down or insisted upon.

2) **It is living in harmony and unity with one another.** Col. 3:12-17, Eph. 4:1-7ff This grace is a beautiful thing. It means seeking the good of the brethren, without one-upmanship or inverted pride.

3) **Grace identifies with people in their need and nastiness.** Only one who is graced can truly do what Paul does in I Cor. 9:19-23. Like his Lord, he follows the grace of incarnation, freely making himself the slave of all. John 1:14ff, Phil. 2:5ff, Heb. 2:11ff. Jesus was the friend of outcasts, rejects, untouchables, Grace takes the initiative here.

**3. Grace Spreads Grace.**

1) **This is by proclaiming the word of grace.** II Cor. 4:13-15, cf. Acts 20:24. The messenger is a person of grace and proclaims with openness and sincerity, II Cor. 4:2, 2:17. It means that our boasting is not in ourselves but in the cross. (Gal. 6:14 cf. I Cor. 1:17,2:1, etc.) and this is the power of grace which works grace in people's lives. (Rom. 1:16).

2) **It means adding nothing to grace.** ie. making it grace plus some condition of man. Gal. 5:1-4, 6:12-13, Rom. 11:6. To preach other than grace is to bring people under terrible burdens. Matt. 23:13-15, Luke 11:46.

3) **Grace overcomes the enemies of man and the gospel.** This can be the opposition we will face from evil powers and antagonistic men.

Zech. 4:6-7. Grace overcomes in “weakness”; which is really true power. II Cor. 4:7-15. It does not depend upon methodologies, it does not resort to propaganda, or psychological pressure, nor does it resort to the manipulation of the politics of man.

Under the power of the God of all grace, whose authority is given to the crucified Christ who reigns as Lord, grace spreads. Where sin increases, grace abounds all the more

#### **4. The Ultimate Triumph of Grace.**

The measurement of grace can be seen in what it achieves in man, bringing him to glory. Eph. 1:12-14. The whole renewed creation will be to the praise of God’s grace. This is the grace that we know now yet is coming to us, I Peter 1:13, which is the cause of great hope. Grace has overcome the world. John 16:33. This word of grace resounds to break through all the rallied powers of evil. II Tim. 2:9. The Revelation shows that it is the Lamb with the marks of slaughter on him who reigns as Lord of history, eg. ch.5:1-14.

Creation is planned and effected by grace. Grace redeems lost man while caring for the creation in order to bring it to its goal. Man is glorified by grace as is the creation. What God begins in grace, he concludes in grace. It is this life which is glorified with Christ. This glorification with God is God’s triumph. This is the Alpha and the Omega, the eternal one who is all grace.