

Living Epistles of Grace

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in an age when information comes at us from practically every angle. There are now hundreds of television channels, many of which run hour after hour of news programming.

Our computers connect us to the Internet with its millions of sites and links that direct us to limitless streams of data. We carry cell phones that keep us all “in touch.”

Really, we have reached the point of overload. No wonder there has been an explosion in the cases of mental neuroses and psychoses. There are just too many facts and figures for the average person to sort through and process.

Yet, despite all the technology, God still chooses that men and women be the primary vehicles of communicating His Gospel, His message. The Great Commission, to go into all the world to preach the Gospel and make disciples, is still in effect. He works in our lives so that oth-

ers may see His great grace and goodness.

This booklet is intended to edify believers in the pursuit of God and in following His call. Through these pages, my hope is that readers will see the importance of living as walking love letters from God, as living epistles of grace.

Chapter One

OVERCOMING THE SPIRIT OF FEAR

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:7-10).

In verse 7, the Holy Spirit makes a definite statement through the apostle Paul, referring to the great gifts that Jesus Christ has imparted:

“For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

This passage reveals what God wants for His people, for new believers and older believers alike. The Word of God teaches that Jesus wants us to have love, a sound mind, and the power of God. He wants us to be able to live without a spirit of fear that causes anxiety, frustration, perplexity, and depression.

It is amazing how many people live in their insecurities. For example, something may have happened in your family, and as a result you are insecure and you have fear. Instead of the love of God and the power of God’s grace operating freely in your mind, the spirit of fear takes over. You know that perfect love casts out fear, but if you do not let love do its work, then fear keeps you from realizing the manifestation of the perfect love of God. When fear gets so deep within your soul, it is a fear that only the love of God can take care of.

Someone else may have difficulty feeling accepted. That person lives in the insecurity of rejection. Something in his background, in his heredity, upbringing, or environment, has harassed him and made it impossible for him to live and be occupied with God’s love.

Someone reading this may be in very deep financial difficulty. Perhaps you do not even know where your next meal is coming from, yet God has not given you the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The Lord wants you to know that He has given you something. The first thing is power, the second thing is love, and the third thing is a sound mind. The Holy Spirit revealing the character of Jesus Christ is producing within you the spirit and the life of Jesus Christ.

You Stand Forgiven

Every time that you are troubled and tormented by fear and insecurity, just remember: God did not give that to you. It did not come from Jesus Christ.

Maybe you have fallen and you have sinned, and as a result you have fear. Perhaps you understand the mechanics of rebound, the mechanics of eternal life and the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the mechanics of the sovereignty of God's impartation of His divine nature. You may understand all of that, but you still have fear—not the fear that is reverent toward God, but the fear that causes torment.

Perhaps you have fallen before, and you

failed recently, and there is a subjective projection in your objective mind that says, “God doesn’t really trust you, and He doesn’t trust you to carry on in your Christian life.”

A spirit of fear comes in, but it doesn’t come from Jesus, because Jesus has cleansed you from that sin. If you have confessed it and, with a sincere and honest heart, you are willing to let the Holy Spirit take over, then you can be assured that your fellowship with God is established and restored. You can continue going forward just as if you never did it. Furthermore, God never imputed it to you because of the principle of positional truth.

God has not given us the spirit of fear! Thank Him and praise Him. Worship Him in your spirit, because God is not giving you the spirit of fear. He is giving you power—power to overcome weakness through His strength. Power to overcome condemnation through Romans 8:1. You do not have to fail the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15). You do not have to be grounded in a root of bitterness or a root of fear. Instead, you can be standing in grace (Romans 5:2), rooted and grounded in the love of God (Ephesians 3:17), and able to believe God. In everything, you can quietly praise His name in your heart,

because He has not given you the spirit of fear.

No Disease Shall Triumph Over You

Someone reading this may have a fatal disease. Maybe it's cancer. Perhaps you are suffering in your body, and you have a very definite disease that will cripple you, paralyze you, or hinder you until God takes you home. That is what it appears to be, and that is what you've been told. You fear sickness and disease. You fear old age. You fear affliction.

But God has not given us the spirit of fear. You don't have to live in fear of sickness and disease. First of all, you should believe God that He will heal you, and ask Him to touch your body. Believe Him with all of your heart, and praise Him for your healing.

In Framingham, Massachusetts, someone came up to me in a service and said, "I was sitting in the pew and all you did was pray for about two or three minutes at the end of the service that God would touch the sick." She had been diagnosed with a growth in her intestines and it had caused her great pain for 11 months. Just at the end of the service—a service at the end of which 13 people professed to have received Christ as their Savior—we stopped and

asked God to touch the afflicted.

He touched this woman. That week, she went to the doctors to get an x-ray, and sure enough the pain had left because the growth had gone.

How precious it is that God has not given us the spirit of fear. Let's say that we do pray—that we ask God and believe God that whatever our condition is He will heal us. Suppose, however, that God wants to do another kind of work in our hearts and wants to give us the grace that's sufficient? In this case, we just thank God that we don't need to have the spirit of fear, even if He doesn't take away the disease. We can love Him and glorify Him and just believe Him, knowing that if we are confessed up-to-date, this is God's perfect will for our life. His plan could be to glorify Himself in our affliction as He did with the apostle Paul.

Oh, thank God that He's given us the spirit of power, the spirit of love, and the spirit of a sound mind. I thank God we don't operate with a sense of insecurity. We don't have to put everyone in our mold. We don't have to fear if everyone doesn't agree with us. We don't have to worry about this one who goes to the right and that one who goes to the left. We can bal-

ance our lives in the throne ministry of Jesus Christ. Thank God that we can trust Him.

I recall seeing little Rachel, a little girl who had been run over by a lawn mower. She has gone in and out of the hospital again and again. Yet, she is always so sweet. Never complains. She's not disturbed over her affliction. She always has a great big smile and gives me a great big hug. That little sweetheart demonstrated more childlike faith than we have seen in a long while in a lot of adult believers. Everything is okay with her. I mean, she doesn't know all the details but she's rejoicing in her affliction. It's beautiful and it's precious! Oh, how God uses the children and their childlike faith to teach us what He wants out of us in every situation and every trial.

Chapter Two

THE SECRET OF GOD'S MOVING

What is the secret of God's moving in a church?

Someone once asked me that very question. He was really asking for an explanation of corporate body truth.

The number one secret to the move of God is that everyone in the assembly recognizes that we're all growing together.

Secondly, we are learning obedience.

Thirdly, the best we know how, through the grace of God and through the Holy Spirit, we love each other.

Fourthly, we are willing to grow and not rely on a formula just because some popular leader advocates it. We're willing to grow in grace and knowledge in all areas as we decrease and allow Him to increase (John 3:30). Certain philosophies gain acceptance, and some people live in insecurity because others abuse the true reality of

God's Holy Spirit.

Someone once said to me, "When we walk into your church, it just seems that the love of God is all over the place. We feel at home, and we just feel that love is there, and life is there. What's your secret?"

The secret, I think, is that we are learning how to worship. We're learning how to put our spirit, soul, and body into honoring Jesus, praising Jesus, loving Jesus, and responding to Jesus.

I think we've come to understand that Jesus loves us just as much as He loves the Father. And, I think we're beginning to enter into the experience that we can love one another with the same kind of love.

The preciousness of God's love is in the fact that I can love you with all my heart and soul and strength, and I can love God with all my heart and soul and strength, because Jesus in me does the loving, the motivating, the energizing, and the manifesting of that love.

As one expression of the Body of Christ, we are learning that divine love has no insecurity. Divine love is unchangeable. Divine love cannot be offended. Divine love isn't critical. It does not judge. It accepts the judgment of Calvary instead of executing judgment on a personal level.

Divine love is able to restore when someone fails, always relating to others in the spirit of meekness and always speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Divine love always carries a burden for the other person (Galatians 6:2). We consider ourselves lest we would also be tempted.

Receive Others As Christ Received You

When we are living as epistles of grace, relating in an atmosphere of receiving one another as Jesus received us (Romans 15:7), loving one another as Jesus loves us (John 15:12), we have the unity of the Spirit that builds “faith fields”—surrounded in areas of need with the special healing presence of God and the assurance that He has done it. Five of us chase a hundred, and a hundred chase ten thousand and put them to flight (Leviticus 26:7, 8).

We acknowledge that we are sinners, and in ourselves we are worms, totally incapable of being consistent, totally incapable of loving, totally incapable of being true in our relationships. Though we don't want to, we'll always find times when we criticize one another and hurt each other. Therefore, we must consider ourselves as nothing before God, but also thank

Him with all our hearts for the Holy Spirit, for His love, and for the Word of God. By faith, we receive the continuing love and the continuing grace of that spirit. Then, that love casts out fear, insecurity, emotional disturbances, depression, grief, and anxiety, because we are just conscious of God's love.

We are not occupied with the fact that somebody isn't doing right. We are occupied with what Jesus has done perfectly. We are not occupied in thinking about how someone mistreated us. We never judge a motive and we never judge an appearance. We understand that we are going to live a life where we don't judge motives and we don't judge appearances. We are going to let Jesus be God, and we are simply going to be servants and friends of His, in love with Him.

Chapter Three

OUR HIGH AND HOLY CALLING

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God;

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Timothy 1:8-9).

I was thinking of that word “calling.” I thank God that Jesus called me out of the business world, laid it upon my heart to pray, and laid it upon my heart to study His Word in the way that He provided for me.

I have a high and a holy calling. I wouldn't trade the high and holy calling for anything in the world. I wouldn't sell it for sin. I wouldn't sell it for lust. I wouldn't sell it for material gain. I wouldn't sell it for silver. I wouldn't sell it for

popularity. I wouldn't sell it for convenience. I wouldn't sell it for anything. It is my high and holy calling.

Glory be to God, this high calling is not according to my works, because in my flesh I am egocentric and wicked and deceitful. Rather, my high calling is mine according to His purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

I thank God that He had me in mind and that He had you in mind. Every child of God has a high and a holy calling.

I wouldn't sell my calling for division. I've told my staff that no matter what it is, don't do anything or say anything that will cause division. We're not going to compromise, but let's exhaust diplomacy. Let's exhaust every option available through divine love and divine grace in order to keep the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4:13), which the Holy Spirit has already established.

Unity in the Spirit

There is nothing more beautiful than the Holy Spirit's unity. Psalm 133 describes it as an ointment poured down upon us. It flows down the head, down the beard, and to the edges of

our garments. There isn't anything more beautiful than the dew of Mount Hermon, which represents the fresh grace of God coming down from heaven, through the Holy Spirit, revealing Jesus.

The ointment of the Holy Spirit comes down from Jesus our Head and goes into the inner roots of our souls and the inner habits of our lives. It flows out from us through the corporate body. The Body is blessed, and God commands a blessing forevermore (Psalm 133:3).

There isn't anything more beautiful than to experience through the Word of God and by the grace of God the joy, the love, the suffering, the trials, the victory, and the peace of a high and holy calling.

There are those who are seeking to be great, those who are climbing the business ladder. But if you're a Christian, simply trust Jesus to equip you for whatever your occupation is. Obey Him and let His Holy Spirit fill you moment-by-moment. Just thank God that you have been called out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13).

God doesn't see your old nature. He has done away with it forever, positionally. You are complete and pure (Acts 15:9). You are free (John

8:36). You can pray and be heard. If you've fallen, you can confess it and instantly, experientially, you are restored. You can sing, and Jesus sings in our midst (Hebrews 2:12).

Jesus Christ, through His precious grace and love, has given you a high and a holy calling. Don't let your occupation make it anything less. Your vocation is to fellowship with God, to worship God, and to love the brethren just as much, with God's love.

Your vocation is to be a soul winner. Your vocation is to communicate Jesus Christ. Your vocation is to live in the power of Jesus Christ's Finished Work. Your occupation is simply an opportunity to communicate the power and purpose and Person of your vocation and to manifest His characteristics.

There isn't anything any greater than the high and holy calling to be a Christian—to be sealed, to be saved, to be a living epistle of grace. Don't take it lightly. Don't discredit it. When you sing, sing with all your might (Ecclesiastes 9:10). When you pray, pray lovingly and with all your might.

Put Jesus First

Judas Iscariot put silver ahead of his calling.

Many are called and few are chosen (Matthew 22:14). Judas put silver first. Don't put silver ahead of love. Don't put silver ahead of forgiveness. Don't put silver ahead of unity. Don't put silver ahead of worship. Don't put silver ahead of soul winning. Don't put silver ahead of prayer meetings.

You say, "I don't want to get rich; I just want to make a good living." Well, make sure that you're living good through the power of Jesus Christ before you think of making even a good living.

Some people are putting silver first. It makes them irritable. It makes them critical. They find it easy to judge. They've got to have everything their way. A million years from tonight they'll be facing Jesus Christ. A billion years from tonight the issue won't be what they did in their job or their business. It will be what Jesus did through them in the corporate body of Christ, the fullness of God that fills all in all (Ephesians 1:22-23). It will be how much we let grace and love work through us. The issue will be how much we allowed divinity to work through our humanity to bring an eternal purpose in the eternal grace of God's remuneration for letting His Spirit flow through us.

Simply, the thing that will matter is this: Did we live as epistles of grace?

Don't let your intellect come between you and God in this divine fellowship. Don't rationalize everything and try to put it in a test tube, but just receive the promises and accept the Word. Don't rationalize, but instead remember that you have been given a high and holy calling to live by faith, by receiving a promise, believing it, and obeying it. Experience the divine nature of that promise. We have been instructed by God to live by the promises of God. In everything, we are to give thanks.

Don't let intellectual rationalization interfere with the blessings of your high and holy calling. Don't let defeat interfere. Maybe you've failed miserably, but don't let that interfere. You still have a high and holy calling. Jesus will never leave you. He still wants to use you, and that is why you are still alive. Jesus doesn't want defeat to interfere with your high and holy calling to live as His epistle of grace.

His calling is high and it is holy. Jesus is living inside of you. Don't let sin and lust get in the way. Don't let doubting and unbelief compromise your call. Just experience it. Grow in it. Thank God for it and love it. It's a very precious

calling.

When you go to bed tonight, thank God for it. When you get up in the morning, thank God for it. When you see your first person of the day, thank God for him. It's a high and a very holy calling, and it is according to grace. It is according to grace!

Chapter Four

LET GRACE MOVE YOUR MOUNTAINS

“Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it” (Zechariah 4:7).

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

In Zechariah 4:7, the Holy Spirit said to Zerubbabel, “Remove this mountain. Remove this mountain by grace.” That is the true meaning of that verse. Every mountain we have can be removed by grace, and it will become a plain. And no matter what your mountain obstacles are, they can be removed not by good works, not by struggling, not by a second blessing, not by this and not by that, but by the pure grace of

God's love.

Receive the manifestation of your holy calling, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of God, and the grace of His mercy as God ministers to your heart in the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:5, Galatians 3:5).

Thank God, grace removes the mountain.

How do you feel about what God has done for you? You were deceitful and desperately wicked, on the road to hell. One day you heard the Gospel. You said, "Lord Jesus, I don't even understand it, but will You come into my heart?"—and He did. He has forgiven one sin after another that you've committed. He has forgiven them forever and cast them into the sea (Micah 7:19). He remembers them no more (Hebrews 8:12).

If you sin now, it breaks temporal fellowship. Continued sin takes away your assurance of God's presence. Nevertheless, your sins are not imputed to your account (Romans 4:7-8). You have received a grace whereby the Holy Spirit doesn't leave you, even when you grieve Him; grace whereby divine love is still available, even when you enter into human love and sentimentality. You have received the grace of God whereby you have the corporate body of Jesus

Christ—the fellowship of like-minded believers who receive and impart His character as they operate in the plan of God, as He has set each one in place for a particular purpose (1 Corinthians 12:4-27).

We ought to be so in love with Jesus that we automatically would know no man after the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). We ought to be so in love with Jesus that we could forgive and restore any brother at anytime in the spirit of love. We ought to be so loving that we wouldn't use our tongue to criticize or judge anyone, because God says not to. We ought to be able to be so in love with Jesus that we feel, "I'm unworthy, but I have received grace. I am unworthy, but I have received love, and I will make sure people receive it from me. I am going to make sure that Jesus Christ ministers it through me to them, just as I have received grace." Let us be ministers of the same love as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

I was thinking the other day of how we received this beautiful grace, yet we often refuse to minister it. Many people come out and say, "I'm not going to put up with this." They begin to make conditions pertaining to people, and they begin to make conditions with God. They

begin to judge people and to be unkind and rude because of jealousy and envy, and the motive is never what they think it is.

How Spiritual People Live

Spiritual people know that Adam is deceitful. Spiritual people esteem others. Spiritual people love, and think no evil. Spiritual people are kind, fervent, and unchanging in their attitude of grace toward the weakest member of the Body. They will receive others, but not unto doubtful disputation.

Spiritual people do not need to prove that they are right, but they will prefer others, lay down their lives (1 John 3:16), and be silent. They will lay down their lives and minister grace and love. And if they are right, God will vindicate them. But in the meantime, they will manifest something that the other person needs desperately.

You don't have to defend yourself. You don't have to argue and rationalize. As mature believers, we don't have to prove anything. We just acknowledge that we are weak sinners, saved by grace.

I Deserve Nothing

I am a weak sinner. I'm standing on no human merits. I do not deserve love, or grace, or power. I do not deserve this ministry. I do not deserve a thing. I do not deserve a thing but hell. I do not deserve a thing but judgment and condemnation, and I'm not saying this just to say words. I do not deserve a single thing. And the longer I'm in the ministry, the more I love and appreciate grace and love and mercy and the Holy Spirit's power to keep me through grace.

I don't deserve it. I don't deserve anything from God or anybody, and that's how we must approach God. I don't deserve anything from anybody. I don't deserve to prove I'm right. I don't deserve anything. But tonight, by God's grace, I've received forgiveness. My name is written in heaven. I've received the Holy Spirit, and I can continually be filled with the gift of salvation.

God is no respecter of persons. By the grace of God, Paul said, "I am standing in that grace" (perfect tense) (Romans 5:2). Grace will remove all my mountains, and I can minister the same grace as a good steward of God.

Why are we here on earth? Just to let God's

love and grace flow to us and through us, so we can minister the life of the invisible God, His character, His nature, and His power. When somebody doesn't deserve love, give him love anyway. Give him something he doesn't deserve, kindly and sweetly and cheerfully.

Confess Jesus Christ and confess love. Praise God and build up the Body. Edify one another. Minister to one another when you are with them and minister to them when you are not. You are not ministering to the flesh; you are ministering grace.

We are living epistles of grace, known and read by all.

CONCLUSION

What is revival? It is receiving something I don't deserve and then letting Jesus communicate it to other people that don't deserve it. Living in revival means always receiving the love and power of God that we don't deserve, and always letting the Holy Spirit shed it abroad, as one continuation of receiving and giving grace.

My tongue ought to be under grace. My mind ought to be under the grace of God. My emotions ought to be rooted in the grace of God. My decisions ought to be rooted in the Word of God and in the mind of Christ and the grace of God. We are just epistles of grace (2 Corinthians 3:2), written on the hearts of every man.

Remember that your high and holy calling has a purpose—to receive and minister grace, to communicate grace. When you're awake, thank God for grace. And today, whatever you do, just come to God as you are and receive what you need continually. Then, be willing to share it and

to minister it.

Thank God that you're an epistle of grace. You are the only Bible that some people will read. Don't be a person who feels that God has given you the right to be a judge at the Tree of Knowledge. He has given you the privilege of being a sinner saved by grace to minister Jesus Christ twenty-four hours a day.