

## *Grace is love for one another in Christ*

Mature saints have grace for one another.

Grace is the underserved love of God. We love because God first loved us. This love has been poured out into our hearts by the Spirit of God.

As the Spirit now dwells within the heart of the repentant believer, the heart's disposition is changed from the inherited disobedience of the will we have in Adam, to reflect the loving grace of God for God and one another in Christ. There has been a change from living for self, to living for Christ and one another.

The new divine nature is birthed in the saint as a result of the believer denying self to live for Christ who is to be all in all. Because of this spiritual birth the saint learns to put to death what remains of that earthly way of living, which in turn promotes the nature of Christ made alive in them. If there is no serious work of being compelled to be putting off the old life of the flesh, there will be little evidence of the new life in the Spirit. We may attempt to mimic the Christian life, but the heart is still made of stone.

We may receive instruction from our culture to live like Christians, to be the best person we can, and to do good deeds in our community. We may attend Church regularly, we may give financially to the Church, we may even do service as officers of the Church; but unless we are a new creation, we are only socially conditioned to live out the image of the Christian on the outside, according to what the mind can learn in the same way we train animals to do our bidding. However, we are still the same person we were at our natural birth, dead to the love and obedience inherent in the children of God.

“Such nominal Christians demonstrate their knowledge of Christ to be false and offensive no matter how eloquently and loudly they talk about the gospel. For true doctrine is not a matter of the tongue, but of life; neither is Christian doctrine grasped only by the intellect and memory, as truth is grasped in other fields of study. Rather, doctrine is rightly received when it takes possession of the entire soul and finds a dwelling place and shelter in the most intimate affections of the

heart. So let such people stop lying, or let them prove themselves worthy disciples of Christ, their teacher.

We have given priority to doctrine, which contains our religion, since it establishes our salvation. But in order for doctrine to be fruitful to us, it must overflow into our hearts, spread into our daily routines, and truly transform us within.” John Calvin

There may be lots of external conditioning of learnt behaviour that approximates what is considered to be the Christian life, but the proof of life with God begins with obedience and dying to self to live for Christ which is seen in the manifest grace of His love, Godward, and towards all mankind, which is compelled by the presence of God and will be absent unless there is a daily commitment to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice so that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds with the mind of Christ.

Jesus Christ died for those who will repent by turning from pleasing themselves, by denying themselves and taking up their cross to follow His example of self-sacrificing service, in order to live for Him in fellowship with God and all His true disciples. Genuine repentance to live for Christ means being forgiven all our sins, which results in the gift of a new life in His image and likeness, to ensure God’s will, will be done, by the receiving of the Holy Spirit in our innermost being, so that love and obedience becomes the new way of living with God. The life of the heart is made evident by the manifestation of the likeness of its disposition. Jesus likened it to the way a tree produces fruit according to its kind.

*"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Matt 7:19-23*

Socialised religion will not stand the judgment of Jesus Christ. We might be able to get away with living as if we are Christians, but when Jesus returns there will be a separation of the real and the fraud that will be eternal.

*"But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. "Then He will also say to those on His left, Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;"*

Matt 25:31-33, 41

Sheep and goats have vastly different priorities when it comes to the Church. In reading the New Testament it would seem that the body life of Christ He desires in His church, and our personal responsibility for its health and effective function, should be our sincere concern, and one of the primary topics of our discussion as we gather together on the Lord's Day.

The sheep called by the Father and given to the Son have received the Spirit of God who is committed to the transformation of every believer into the image of Christ. However, God has determined that this process must include the active participation of every saint, so that the work of transformation is owned by the individual believer as they take responsibility for their role in reflecting the nature of Christ that God has graciously given to them. This is called the fruit of abiding, and not just to sit back as a spoilt child and leave their growing up to the Father.

If the Spirit of God is in residence in the believer, there will be a hatred for the life of the flesh which is in opposition with the Spirit, and enlightened by the Spirit there will be an intense knowledge of the flesh and its many fruits so that there is no excuse for not putting what belongs to the flesh to death.

Every life has it fruit, and the fruit is the manifestation of the presence of God or satan. It is the Spirit of Christ and life, or the flesh of self and death. *'For those who are in accord with the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are in accord with the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.'*

Rom 8:5-8

"If we are not our own but the Lord's, it's clear what errors we must flee, and what we must direct our whole lives toward. We are not our own; therefore, neither our reason nor our will should dominate our plans and actions. We are not our own; therefore, let us not make the gratification of our flesh our end. We are not our own; therefore, as much as possible, let us forget ourselves and our own interests.

Rather, we are God's. Therefore, let us live and die to Him. We are God's. Therefore, let His wisdom and His will govern all our actions. We are God's. Therefore, let us, in every way in all our lives, run to Him as our only proper end. How far has he progressed who's been taught that he is not his own, who's taken rule and dominion away from his own reason and entrusted them to God. For the plague of submitting to our own rule leads us straight to ruin, but the surest way to safety is neither to know nor to want anything on our own, but simply to follow the leading of the Lord.

Let then our first step be to abandon ourselves, that we may apply all our strength to obedience to God. When I say "obedience?" I don't mean giving lip service to God; but rather, being free from the desire of the flesh, turning our minds over completely to the bidding of the Spirit of God." John Calvin

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."*  
Matt 5:6

All the genuine sheep of the Great Shepherd hunger for His presence because it is only in His presence where their hearts might be fed the food of heaven, and be drawn daily to the place of sanctification. The Lord has made the fruit of the flesh abundantly clear to us in His word.

### **God has made it clear that the fruit of the flesh is not hidden from our sight**

In the Bible speaks of the "flesh," is referring to our natural human sin tendencies. We are all born with a fallen sin nature. *'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned.'* (Rom 5:12) From the first day of our natural birth our natural disposition is to please ourselves. We can be trained

like monkeys to behave in more socially acceptable ways, but, without the power of God entering our hearts with His divine nature, we will remain self-centred. The new nature from God is given to the truly repentant heart by faith. Anything not done from faith is not empowered and enabled by the Holy Spirit is a “work of the flesh.” *‘and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.’* (Rom 8:8) *‘whatever is not from faith is sin.’* Rom14:23

### **God has provided for our life in the Spirit**

*“I will put My Spirit within you and bring it about that you walk in My statutes, and are careful and follow My ordinances.”* Ezek 36:27

The Holy Spirit gives His motivation to the repentant heart. He makes it possible for us to make choices that are of the Spirit of holiness, rather than the flesh of sinful man. *‘walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.’* (Gal 5:16) *‘So that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.’* Rom 8:4

*‘Therefore, treat the parts of your earthly body as dead to sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. But now you also, rid yourselves of all of them: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene speech from your mouth.’* Col 3:5–8

Since we no longer live for ourselves we are to consider ourselves “*crucified with Christ*” (Gal 2:20) and our old sin nature from physical birth as now dead, (Rom 6:11) but it is obvious to all who seek holiness that the flesh does not die easily. A battle continues in every follower of Christ. *‘For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want.’*

Gal 5:17

The sanctification that separated is for service to God continues on a daily basis. So, we must *‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for His good pleasure.’*

Phil 2:12-13

## Grace is for one another

Scripture teaches us that all the gifts we utilise are given to us by God. And they are given along with this law of our faith, that they be put to use for the good of our neighbours. But Scripture goes even further than this when it compares us and the gifts we've been given to the members of a human body.

No member of the body exists to serve itself, nor does each member exist merely for its own private use. Rather, it puts its abilities to use for the other members of the body. Nor does any member of the body alone receive any advantage from itself outside of that which belongs to the entire body. Whatever, therefore, a godly man is able to do, he should do it for his brothers. He should consider his own interests only insofar as he sets his mind on the general edification of the whole church. John Calvin

## What exactly must we work out?

*'Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behaviour, idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.'*

Gal 5:19-24

*'for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like ordinary people?'*

1 Cor 3:3

*'Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.'*

1 John 2:15-16

*"...and everyone did what was right in their own eyes."*

Judges 17:6

*“For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”*  
Rom 8:13

To live according to the flesh is the same as consciously fulfilling the sinful desires of the flesh, which is disobeying the law of love, and breaking those laws of God we knew beforehand from the scriptures and the revelation of the Spirit in our hearts. Working out our salvation is an attitude of the heart and mind resisting the disposition of the old man with determination which requires us to *‘Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.’*  
1 Tim 6:12

*‘So you too, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore sin is not to reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts.’*  
Rom 6:11-12

*‘Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because the one who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human lusts, but for the will of God.’*  
1 Pet 4:1-2

### **The saints live by Grace**

And living by the grace of God is the same as walking by the Spirit. In this we know the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit has taken up residence in the believer and He brings with Him the knowledge of His holy life and the fruit of Christ so that the saints will have no excuse for not putting on the life of Christ.

The Holy Spirit leads the saints into the life of righteousness and truth. He doesn't coerce an unwilling person to do something by using force or threats. He needs people to take responsibility for their spiritual growth. If there is no passion for growth, He hands us over to the consequences of sin until we desire life in Christ more than the stench of death in self which drives us back to our cross to live for Him. As spiritual growth takes greater hold of us, there will be an increasing experience of the compelling love of Christ to be like Him so that we have His passions and desires to please the Father of glory.

2 Cor 5:14

As growth in Christ increase, the stench of the flesh becomes more repulsive, and the sweet aroma of holiness becomes more alluring, becoming a

powerfully and mysteriously attractive and seductive claim on our hearts. The wedding supper of the Lamb of God becomes intensely personal and increasingly desirable.

### **Grace compels us to accept spiritual care for one another**

It should not be surprising that the most repeated command we have from God is to love one another, because love is from God. This love is sacrificial in following Christ's example, and seeks the highest good for one another as God in Christ seeks to transform us into the image of Christ.

*Jesus makes sure we don't misunderstand what love requires. "Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends."*

John 15:13

The one another verses of the Bible that relate to our shared lives in Christ indicate what His fellowship is supposed to look like. Our focus needs to be on life lived by the Spirit, otherwise we become people pleasers and neglect the commands of God. *'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.'*

Rom 8:14

The number of the verses calling on us to love one another, seventeen, and the thirty-five verses that command us to care for one another, should indicate that everything in these imperatives to care for one another is no less than an expression of God's love in action. And since God's word is prescriptive for how we should live, and because His savings grace is always effective, we could conclude that these one another verses are evidence of our regeneration in Christ. We are to be conveyors of God's grace.

### **Loving one another is grace abounding**

*"I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

John 13:34

*"By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."*

John 13:35

*"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."*

John 15:12

*"This I command you, that you love one another."*

John 15:17

*'Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for the one who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law.'* Rom 13:8

*'and may the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another.'* 1 Thess 3:12

*'Now as to the love of the brothers and sisters, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.'* 1 Thess 4:9

*'We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is only fitting, because your faith is increasing abundantly, and the love of each and every one of you toward one another grows ever greater.'* 2 Thess 1:3

*'Since you have purified your souls in obedience to the truth for a sincere love of the brothers and sisters, fervently love one another from the heart.'* 1 Peter 1:22

*'Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.'* 1 Pet 4:8

*'See how great a love the Father has given us, that we would be called children of God.'* 1 John 3:1

*'This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.'* 1 John 3:23

*'Beloved, let's love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.'* 1 John 4:7

*'Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'* 1 John 4:11

*'No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us.'* 1 John 4:12

*'Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.'* 2 John 1:5

*Do not judging one another.* Rom 14:13

*Be devoted to one another.* Rom 12:10

<i>Be of the same mind.</i>	Rom 12:16; Rom 15:5
<i>Build up one another.</i>	Rom 14:19
<i>Accept one another.</i>	Rom 15:7
<i>Abel to admonish one another.</i>	Rom 15:14; Col 3:16
<i>Greet one another with a holy kiss.</i>	Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12
<i>Have the same care for one another.</i>	1 Cor 12:25
<i>Serve one another.</i>	Gal 5:13
<i>Showing tolerance for one another in love.</i>	Eph 4:2
<i>speak truth each one...for we are members of one another.</i>	Eph 4:25
<i>Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other</i>	Eph 4:32
<i>Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.</i>	Eph 5:19
<i>Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.</i>	Eph 5:21
<i>with humility of mind regard one another</i>	Phil 2:3
<i>bearing with one another, and forgiving each other</i>	Col 3:13
<i>with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another</i>	Col 3:16
<i>Abound in love for one another</i>	1 Thess 3:12
<i>comfort one another.</i>	1 Thess 4:18
<i>encourage one another</i>	1 Thess 5:11 Heb 10:25
<i>build up one another</i>	1 Thess 5:11
<i>Live in peace with one another</i>	1 Thess 5:13
<i>always seek after that which is good for one another</i>	1 Thess 5:15
<i>But encourage one another day after day</i>	Heb 3:13
<i>stimulate one another to love and good deeds</i>	Heb 10:24
<i>encouraging one another</i>	Heb 10:25

<i>Do not speak against one another</i>	James 4:11
<i>Do not complain, brethren, against one another</i>	James 5:9
<i>Therefore, confess your sins to one another</i>	James 5:16
<i>pray for one another</i>	James 5:16
<i>Be hospitable to one another</i>	1 Peter 4:9
<i>As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another</i>	1 Peter 4:10
<i>keep fervent in your love for one another</i>	1 Peter 4:8
<i>have fellowship with one another</i>	1 John 1:7

To be able to live for Christ and love one another effectively, we have to be convinced that Christ possesses us, and actually lives in our innermost being. Otherwise, we only have a doctrine of Christ in us, and we fall back on the mind of the flesh. If we believe Christ is in us, all that He is, is available to us so we can live for Him as the light of the world.

A failure to keep the one another commands is to shut ourselves away from the body of Christ. This is logical because the one another verses make us tools of grace in Christ for one another. In Christ we are intended to love one another as instruments of His grace.

One another care will be very difficult if we have a disconnect between what we say we believe, and how we actually live. Because belief determines behaviour, a disconnect between belief and behaviour means we need to re-examine our understanding of Rom 12:1-2. 'Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.'

To be convenors of God's grace we need to obey all His word. To be in Christ is to live for Christ because we have taken up our cross to follow Him. (Matt 16:24; Luke 9:23-24) This means we obey all He has commanded.

## **Our obedience in loving one another is evidencing our love of Jesus**

*“Whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do.”* John 14:12

*“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”* John 14:15

*“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me.”*  
John 14:21

*“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.”* John 14:23

*“Whoever does not love me does not keep my words.”* John 14:24

The only way we can do as He says is to hear Him say: *“Abide in Me”*

*“He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”* John 15:5

## **Where does the rubber hit the road?**

Who do we confess our sins to one another in the body of Christ? When we are willing to be honest about our sin, others might also have the courage to also be real about theirs and we both may enjoy the reconciliation of love.

When do we talk with one another about what God is working in us and them? If we were sharing regularly about what God is doing others might realise God is actually working in them also.

We need to encourage others to persevere in the faith when trials are heavy. If we did, others might start to understand that they can trust in God to use His providence for their good and the good of others.

## **Walking by the Spirit manifests itself like this:**

*Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.* 1 Cor 13:4-7

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