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## **Grace Orientation**

We have seen the great illustration of humility in the life of the Apostle Paul. As Paul progressed through the stages of the spiritual life, his self-assessment changed: From least of the apostles (1 Cor. 15:9), to the very least of all saints (Eph 3:8), to the worst sinner ever (1Tim 1:15). The more we grow in the spiritual life, the more we realize how despicable we really are in the old man, in Adam, in our sin nature.

We also saw how gaining an experiential and personal understanding of the truth of total depravity in our own sinful self leads to a great relief in the fact of retroactive positional truth. Total depravity means there is nothing in fallen man that God can find pleasure in or accept; our flesh is totally depraved in God's sight! Retroactive positional truth is identification with Christ in His physical death and burial, and it connotes breaking the power of the Old Sin Nature (O.S.N.), Rom 6:3-7, Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

When we realize that nothing good dwells in us, in the flesh, we are ready to join John the Baptist in John 3:30-31 when he says, "He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all, he who is of the earth is from the earth and speaks of the earth." In verse 31, John refers to the moment of salvation where the believer is transferred from position in Adam (he who is of the earth) to position in Christ (He who comes from above).

The realization of our personal depravity leads to a decisive point in our spiritual life. We decide to mentally separate from our fleshly life through the power of the cross. This separation prepares us for fruit bearing, and one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is grace orientation. John 12:23-26, And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me;

and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

When you are firmly convinced of the badness of who you were in Adam, you are ready to surrender your will to the only One who is good, the Lord Jesus Christ. Only then can you become a vessel of mercy as seen in Luke 7:47, “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much;” A vessel of mercy realizes that the only greatness that matters in life is to have great capacity for both giving and receiving. You receive grace blessing and you also give grace to others. You are generous, because freely you have received, so freely you give. 1 Peter 4:10a, As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Grace orientation is one of the manifestations of spiritual self-esteem, that first great plateau in the spiritual life. When you practice grace orientation, you show mercy toward yourself when you fail, and you give others the benefit of the doubt. Spiritual self-esteem comes after you have rooted yourself in the foundation, Jesus Christ, and then established yourself in humility. You have learned and applied enough doctrine to have fallen in love with God the Father. 1 Peter 5:5, You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Grace orientation flows out of genuine humility in our souls, which in turn is fed by our growing awareness that nothing good dwells in us, that is our flesh, and we must decrease and He, the Lord Jesus Christ, must increase.

We are now ready for this subject of grace orientation, the fourth problem solving device. The fourth and the fifth PSDs (grace orientation and doctrinal orientation) go together and are mutually reinforcing. The more our souls penetrate the mystery doctrines of the Church-age, the more grace oriented our focus on life will become. At the moment of salvation we were indwelt by God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; this occurs when we were dead spiritually, and it is very humbling. If a believer submits to and applies the teachings of his doctrinally-sound right pastor teacher, that believer will discover a mental attitude of grace growing within.

Grace orientation is a mental attitude, Prov 23:7, For as he thinks within himself, so he is. A person's mental attitude falls into one of two categories: Humility or Arrogance. Arrogance is the great enemy of spirituality. Satan is the author of arrogance, and traps many believers into thinking his way. Your mental attitude is one of arrogance when you think that your own agenda is more important than God's, when there is something in your life that is more important to you than Bible doctrine. Or when you find yourself thinking you are better than other people around you, trying to prove something to others, justifying your actions to

yourself or to others, or competing with other believers. Arrogance is the manifestation of evil, and it is the opposite of grace orientation.

Humility is the opposite of arrogance; it is a state of mind which regards oneself as less important than others, and one that readily submits to authority. Jesus Christ was the pioneer of true humility in His First Advent. He submitted completely to the authority and the will of God the Father, even to the point of death. Phil 2:3-8, Do nothing motivated by contentiousness or ambitious pride, but with humility of mind [grace orientation] let each of you keep on considering one another as more important than himself; do not merely be regarding your own personal interests, but also for the personal interests of others. Keep on thinking this [doctrine] within yourselves which was also resident in Christ Jesus, who, although He pre-existed in the essence of God, did not think equality with God a gain to be seized, but He deprived Himself of the proper function of deity when He had received the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men. In fact, although having being discovered in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of spiritual death that is the death of the cross.

Jesus Christ is equal to God the Father in His deity, yet in perfect humility He subjugated Himself to the Father's plan. No believer can adopt the thinking of Jesus Christ and at the same time be arrogant. Bible doctrine is the thinking of Jesus Christ, and learning and applying doctrine is the antidote to arrogance. Col 3:12-13, So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. You have freely received grace, and you are to freely give grace. Open your eyes to how needy you are, and how much you have been given by the Lord! The only greatness that matters in life is great capacity for receiving and giving.

Grace orientation is a response to grace, and grows as the believer metabolizes and applies Bible doctrine, particularly doctrines concerning the cross such as, Hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), Christology (concerning the Person of Christ), Soteriology (concerning salvation). Eph 2:1-9 is a terrific passage that brings together all these doctrines in a clinic on grace. Eph 2:1, And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, The word dead sheds light on grace; the Greek word nekros means spiritual death, being completely separated from God the Father and having no hope of eternal life.

We are just as helpless in spiritual death as in physical death. God in his mercy and grace chose to work out a solution for man's salvation, a solution that would cost God dearly. Eph 2:2-5, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were

by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).

Rom 5:8, God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet spiritually dead, Christ died as a substitute for us. God made us alive by means of regeneration (born again), justification (perfect righteousness imputed to regenerated believer), eternal life imputed to the human spirit, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places the believer in permanent union with the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the Right Hand of God the Father.

1 Cor 1:30-31, But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord." Salvation is the pinnacle of the grace of God in the life of men. God did for us what we could not do for ourselves, Rom 8:3, For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh. The Law was God's way of teeing up salvation by works, and showing mankind that trying to handle this on his own would only lead to complete and utter failure; this was part of the manifold wisdom of God.

The dispensations can be seen as a drama in several acts. In one act of human history, man tried to live up to the precepts of the Law. Then, at the perfect time, God sent His Son to do for man what man could not do for himself. Man's very failure at salvation by works set the stage for salvation by grace. Man now knew without a doubt that a Savior was needed. Gal 3:24, Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. Man's salvation has nothing to do with his efforts, good or bad; works have no bearing on salvation.

Rom 3:19-28, Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of

the one who has faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Back to Eph 2:6-7, and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. After salvation, even with all the divine assets that God gives us, we still fail utterly whenever we work in the energy of the flesh; we end up like Paul in Rom 7:24 crying out "wretched man that I am." Our resurrection at the Rapture of the church will reveal the surpassing riches of God's grace despite our failures in time. Eph 2:8-9, For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Salvation is the gift of God. In giving, the work is done by the giver, the receiver simply receives. With all grace gifts from God, God does all of the work; we do nothing. Grace refers to all that God is free to do for mankind because of our Lord's sacrifice for sins, the Work done for us on the Cross. Grace means that God has done all the work and receives the credit (glory), and man receives the free benefits. Grace means that man has received from God that which he has not earned or deserved. Grace is free, limitless, unmerited blessing to helpless, undeserving sinners from the loving God who is completely satisfied by the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

All precedent for living a grace oriented spiritual life is found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. John 1:14-18, And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth was realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. Here is the humanity of Christ functioning under both grace orientation and doctrinal orientation.

Grace orientation is a combination of humility and gratitude, humility concerning self without Christ, and gratitude concerning Christ. Grace orientation includes loving the unlovable; it involves having the ability to demolish, but instead stooping to help. Grace orientation is a response to grace that involves letting that grace change your thinking so that you become what you observe and admire. 2 Cor 3:18, But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

Graciousness includes times when you are moved with pity for someone who may be blind or ill, physically or spiritually. Mat 20:29-34, As they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. And two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" The crowd sternly told them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." Moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they regained their sight and followed Him.

In Mar 1 we see another case where our Lord exuded mercy and compassion on helpless people. Mark 1:40-45, And a leper came to Jesus, eseeching Him and falling on his knees before Him, and saying, "If You are willing, You can make me clean." Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. And He sternly warned him and immediately sent him away, and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." But he went out and began to proclaim it freely and to spread the news around, to such an extent that Jesus could no longer publicly enter a city, but stayed out in unpopulated areas; and they were coming to Him from everywhere.

Grace orientation is the ability to see people as God sees them. It is the ability to let them live their lives as unto the Lord. It is the capacity to let people make mistakes without judging them. Graciousness is an outstanding quality of the mature believer. The new believer has tasted grace, and as he grows in Christ, he learns to think graciously rather than arrogantly. The advanced believer is gracious, forgiving, and unassuming. Out of his innermost being flow rivers of living water. He has become a conduit that brings grace to a thirsty world.

Salvation comes the same way for ALL, faith alone in Christ alone. Rom 4:2-3, For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." While the O.T. saints were under the Law, they were not saved by the Law. The Law and works have no power to save anyone, only the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, dying spiritually for the sins of the world, can accomplish that. The law was effective only as it drove the transgressor to Christ. Gal 3:24, Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

The O.T. saints were not saved by keeping the law, nor were they saved by the sacrifices they performed, Heb 10:1, For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. The sacrifice was a reminder of sin, and it foreshadowed the true sacrifice

that was to come in Jesus Christ. The O.T. saints had faith in the coming Messiah who was yet to be revealed; we have faith in the Savior who has been revealed, Jesus Christ.

The first four manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit found in Gal 5:22 are, But the fruit or the production of the Spirit keeps on being virtue-love, joy [inner happiness], peace [inner peace and overt prosperity], patience [patience/longsuffering], The fifth part of the fruit of the Spirit is the Greek noun chrestotes which means kindness, graciousness, generosity, and refers to being gracious and operating in grace orientation. Grace-orientation is the believer's recognition of all that God has freely given, (Rom 5:8; 8:32; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 Cor 2:9). It is the basis of gratitude to God Who has given His Unique Son for us and, having given Him, now freely gives us all things. Grace-orientation is the believer's awareness from metabolized doctrine that "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven," John 3:27.

James 1:17, Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow. Being gracious and operating in grace orientation means the believer never forgets where they have come from and always is grateful and thankful to God for where they are and where they're going.

Eph 2:11-13, Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands, remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. Grace orientation means that you remember what you were like before TLJC affected your life. The grace-oriented believer also expresses gratitude to the Father, Col 1:12, Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. The grace-oriented believer then is very gracious toward others.

Grace-oriented believers profoundly appreciate that there is no condemnation in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1; 1 John 3:20-21). Therefore grace oriented believers do not condemn others; they do not judge, criticize or malign others. They are quick to edify, slow to anger and even quick to listen. This is because "chrestotes or graciousness" develops the characteristic of tolerance and a live-and-let-live attitude as taught in Rom 14:4-19, Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.

Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives

thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God. For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God.

For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God." So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this - not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. Therefore do not let what is for you a good thing be spoken of as evil; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who in this way serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.

Grace-oriented believers recognize that sins were not imputed to the believer. They recognize the righteousness of God and of Christ were imputed to the believer. Therefore being gracious and operating in grace orientation, this type of believer does not assign sins to others.

Toward the unsaved, grace oriented believers have the ministry of reconciliation, 2 Cor 5:18-21. To those believers who have failed, grace oriented believers have a ministry of restoration as taught in Gal 6:1-5, Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ. Gal 6:3 For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Gal 6:4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. Gal 6:5 For each one shall bear his own load.