

# Grace

## Our Message, Our Theology and Our Practice

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## Introduction

Grace is a common, rather simple word. We have become so accustomed to the term 'grace' that we fail to revel in its multi-faceted wonder and the depth of its incredible realities. The intent of this article is to show three powerful aspects of grace. Grace is a *glorious message* of unsurpassable value. Grace is a term of *deep theological significance*. Grace is a *dynamic motivational guide for us to practice*.

These three aspects of grace (the message, the theology and the practice) are not independent from each other but inter-related, and clearly overlapping. Yet, their understanding in a systematic (not necessarily progressive) way gives enlightenment and greater understanding to each one of us regarding grace. The tendency of believers today is to emphasize one of these aspects of grace (the message, or theological system, or practice) to the detriment of the others, therefore minimizing the significance of the reality of grace in the life of the believer and the

church locally and globally. No doubt readers will find elements of what follows to be an obvious ‘restating’ of some common biblical concepts. The intent is to weave those common concepts into a strong fabric of “grace theological” standing. This fabric of grace is for declaration as the “message” as well as the “practice” for everyday living, which is unique to our understanding as believers in this present dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ. It is the prayerful ambition that in this objective one might not only find enlightenment, but also feel the prompting of the Holy Spirit toward new realities of belief and practice for the glory of God. These three aspects or forms of grace are similar to three aspects of time – past, present and future. The three aspects of space or volume are length, width, and depth. In each example, none of them exists alone but reveals something different than the other aspects and together they make up the whole. So, it is with the message, the theology, and the practice of grace.

## Chapter One

### Our Message is Grace

God is a gracious God from Genesis to Revelation. His attributes are constant and consistent. He is ontologically full of grace just as He is holy and just. These attributes are not merely what He does practically nor are they contextualized according to a particular circumstance, rather they are due to His eternal character. Although there are plenty of examples of God's grace evidenced throughout the Old and New Testaments, and many stories which illustrate His grace, the Scriptures declare that in this present age of the Church, the gospel message is "the Gospel of the Grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Paul uses this term to signify the major ingredient in this message which is declared to the world. In his recorded travels in the book of Acts as well as in the letters Paul penned, the message of grace is explained. He even goes so far as to refer to message he preached "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8) due to its distinction and application from the earlier Jewish message.

Paul contrasts this declaration of God's grace in this present age with past ages in which the message was different. He claims in the books of Galatians and Ephesians to have been given this message directly from the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. He did not learn it from those original disciples who were already doing ministry. He also notes that his message was not merely due to self-discovery of Old Testament readings (Gal. 1:11-24; Eph. 3:1-10). Paul's own miraculous conversion recorded in Acts 9 on the road to Damascus separated him from the beginning as "God's chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). This was clearly a message which had no ethnic boundaries and caused him to "unleash" the message of God for salvation to all people (Gentiles are all races, and ethnicities other than the Jews) rather than confine his focus to his own Jewish brothers which was the learned (by enculturation) historical pattern of God's favor since the days of Abraham. Paul (who grew up as Saul) had learned this

well just as all religious Jews did for centuries.

Toward the end of his ministry, Paul writes to Titus, declaring, “The grace of God which brings salvation to all men has been revealed” (Titus 2:10). This message is salvific, and life changing. The grace of God extends ‘favor’ to those who do not deserve this favor. The message is of God’s love for those undeserving of His love: “For God demonstrated His own love for us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Paul explains the ‘activating ingredient’ of the grace of God is **faith** in that which God provided for salvation on the cross – “For by grace are you saved by faith” (Eph. 2:8). The message is summarized by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians where he explains, “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation” (II Corinthians 5:18, 19).

By this we might understand that the message of grace, is the message of reconciliation of God and man through Christ Jesus.

This message is glorious because it is based on God's grace demonstrated by Christ dying on the cross for mankind with total disregard for the recipient's gender, race, socio-economic status, or depth of depravity! He is the innocent sacrifice for all of sinful mankind (II Corinthians 5:21). What an incredible message the message of grace is. It has no parallel prior to it or following it.

Lewis Sperry Chafer notes well the nature of that grace for salvation when he states: "*By its nature it (grace) is interminable and is a position before God which rests wholly on the merit of Christ, to be conditioned by and dependent upon human worthiness is to contradict the whole order of divine grace and to make impotent man to be, in the end, his own savior*" (Systematic Theology, 1948, Vol. III, pp. 225,226).

His words capture well the essence of

pure grace – it is dependent upon God and His finished work on the cross, not our human efforts to clean up our act in a certain way so as to be presentable to God. In fact, this would demean God’s grace as if man were not in need of it. Chafer is also well-known for stating that the “riches of grace” are part of the “33 divine undertakings” which happen in the life of a believer when that person places faith in God for salvation based on the cross (Chafer, III, p. 227). In response to faith - not actions of human effort - God initiates 33 different blessings on our behalf as a “new creation” (II Corinthians 5:17).

I am simply overwhelmed with how Paul explains to the Ephesians that God has saved, them and made them alive, seated them with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ, “in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace” (Ephesians 2:6-7). The message of grace is God’s overwhelming love expressed on the cross for all sinful men. This grace is on display as it reveals the transformation

of lives from lost to heavenly saints for all eternity! As the sinner begins to understand, with awe, the great height of God's love, he desires to respond by faith to God's supreme sacrifice for sinful man to provide reconciliation with God through the blood of Christ. What an amazing, life-changing message!

Why do so many people not respond to this message of incredible grace? Most likely it is due to the reality that it is so counter-intuitive and contradictory to our human pride and ego. We experience life all around us, and mimic our society which places value on our human actions and activities: what we do, say, and perform. God's love does not conform to that human paradigm which automatically filters and excludes concepts and realities which do not fit nicely into it. It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit, who John tells us brings conviction of guilt, and sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8:11), that one comes to faith.

The application of the content of our

message is a resulting Church for this dispensation. The nature of the church is dependent upon what message believers have responded to in faith. It cannot be any other way. If I respond to a message which states, "Clean yourself up so God can accept you," or "Do good things to please God," the church will reflect this as the norm and values of church life. This is rampant all over the world where I have traveled. People are working to please God, hoping they gain enough credit to tip the scale in their favor at the end of their earthly journey. This is not our message of grace, and it should certainly not be the modus operandi of our fellowship together as believers. This message is learned from other religions and is an emphasis on the message of works or sanctification not justification by grace through faith. It may be more similar to the message of other dispensations, but not the gospel of the grace of God.

## Chapter Two

### Our Theology is Grace

I appreciate how so many writers have endeavored to capture Paul's distinctive ministry for which he was called by the resurrected Lord. Dr. Charles F. Baker, Pastor J. C. O'Hair, and more recently, Pastors Craig MacDonald and Joel Finck have assisted our understanding of the grace theological position. As an early adult, C.R. Stam's book, *Things That Differ: The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* (1951) really opened my eyes, and helped me to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture and not just lightly peruse and assume that "similar" means "sameness." I also appreciate Dr. DeWitt's challenges to think deeply and respond to scholarly works which both support and criticize our grace theology as well as to do good Biblical exegesis rather than resort to broad generalizations which may not be sustainable in defense of our position. To build a consistent theology of grace is a deep and long process in

which we compare and contrast Scripture prayerfully with the Lord's direction. We need to seek to construct a framework for understanding this present dispensation in light of the whole of Scripture, while at the same time noting continuing horizontal truths as well as vertical truth and realities.

Some of the broad generalizations which came from early dispensationalists are helpful, but not completely accurate upon further study and examination. Yet, we are tempted sometimes to be unwilling to even examine these generalizations because of our respect for those great men and theologians who helped explain dispensational theology to the rest of us and those outside of our grace camp. Honest inquiry and openness to study only makes for more sound conviction and dialogue. I appreciated my advanced theological and biblical training at non-grace institutions which helped me better understand other perspectives, and wholeheartedly reaffirmed my commitment to our grace theology. My grace theology is not a first generation

apologetic coming out of Covenant Theology or Pentecostalism. I was raised in a first generation conservative grace preacher's family, and had that message expounded to me my whole life with little outside perspective to compare to it. We do well to continue to respect and honor our past and to study the Scriptures rather than just repeat their words.

Paul's emphasis for our Church age is described as God's "*oikonomia*" (Luke 16:2, 3, 4; I Corinthians 9:17; Ephesians 1:10; 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25; I Timothy 1:4). In the Luke passage, the reference is to a house steward or administrator which illustrates the meaning very well. God's household is being managed by "grace." It is the key component of this present "*oikonomia*" in which the Church the Body of Christ is prominent, and we are not only saved by the message of Grace, but the theological framework of the Church is the grace of God. In Ephesians, Paul explains that those who before the cross were called "uncircumcised" were "separated from Christ, excluded...foreigners, and without hope...or God in the world, but now in

Christ Jesus you were brought near through the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-14). The standing of all believers is based solely on the grace of God and not on ritualistic practices of allegiance. “His purpose was to create in Himself one new man of two thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility” (Ephesians 2:15b-16). This “one new man” is Paul’s reference to the Body of Christ which in Ephesians 3 is explained as the “mystery” of the Gentiles and Israel as heirs and joint members of one body (3:6). This theology of grace is shown by Paul to be global and greater to the previous practice under the law of the selective favor of God to a people in covenant. It is because prior to the cross of Christ, the clear sufficiency of grace for all peoples was not possible due to the necessity of a just judgment for sin.

It’s worth noting that authors such as Dr. Andrew Farley in his book *Naked Gospel* sees and distinguishes the theology, principles, and actions of the twelve disciples as different than what is applicable after the cross of

Christ explained in Paul's epistles. I believe it is significant when scholars who would not be called "grace preachers" see these distinctions through careful study, and teach and write on them with conviction. Farley would note that the explanations in the Gospels further emphasize the human futility to achieve rightness with God by the law and human effort, and the need for the cross and a theology of grace.

Grace theology is often characterized by its "spiritual" and "heavenly hope," as opposed to the Jewish earthly prophecies of a future literal kingdom. But it is more than simply the future hope which characterizes a grace theology, it is, as Dr. R.F. Suerig (former pastor of Grace Memorial Church in Denver, Colorado) notes, even the Church's *view of Jesus Christ*. Dr. Suerig lists our view of Christ as:

1. *The crucified Lord, on the cross.* Paul doesn't spend time on Christ's earthly life (II Corinthians 5:16), rather His death for payment of our sin and our redemption. He was crucified, buried, and raised (I Corinthians 15:1-5).

2. *Christ in glory.* Colossians 3:4: “When Christ who is your life appears, then you will also appear with Him in glory.” He is the risen, living, High Priest making intercession for us. Paul makes his defense before Agrippa and states, “I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven” (Acts 26:19).

3. *Christ is inside the believer.* Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me.” Christ is “in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

4. *Christ is coming again.* Paul tells that Christ is returning and that He will also catch up the Church which is His Body to their calling (I Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Titus 2:13) of uniting with the Head completely for all eternity. (Suerig, *The Testimony Through the Ages* 2d, 1997, pp. 129-130).

Dr. Suerig’s emphasis is very much needed in contrast to the many who solely teach and emphasize the earthly life of Jesus as a model for our practice. Certainly,

we can understand the nature and character of God illustrated by the living Word (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:2-3). But, intending to “do as Jesus did” in this present age - after the reality of the cross, and the indwelling Holy Spirit - although well-intended, does not work. The heavenly Christ sits at the right hand of the Father as our mediator (I Timothy 2:5), having finished the work of justification for sinful man before a holy God (Romans 3:25-26). Our actions and emphasis today is to honor and glorify him.

### ***Grace Theology is about Identity***

As we continue our exploration of the theology of grace, it can be stated that our theology is strongly about identification. Paul explains to the Roman believers that they were identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-7). This is the spiritual baptism of identification which attributes grace to all believers who by faith come to God, trusting in that once-for-all act of Christ as the propitiation (satisfaction of

God's righteous wrath) for the sin of mankind (Romans 3:25). The believer of today is identified as "complete in Christ" (Colossians 2:10), which, according to our grace theology, means one can do nothing of his own to add to what Christ did fully on the cross (Hebrews 9:26-28). Our identity as fully righteous before God (Titus 3:5-6), is a key element of our grace theology, which is not present in other theologies outside of the Pauline epistles.

Phillip Yancey (*What's So Amazing About Grace*, 1997), states this reality this way, "Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more...and grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less" (p. 71). Our theological emphasis of grace addresses the cultural confusion and identity crises of our times. Grace theology asks believers to trust the reality of the Scriptures: that a believer's identity is that of a forgiven saint who is complete in Christ and not someone "on a journey toward faith." Others purport this "faith journey," which is more similar to some non-Christian faiths, and they also call on people to be non-judgmental

toward anyone else on their individual “journeys.” These ideas are not based on Scripture or the truth of who God is and what He did. Rather, they are based on popular pluralism (everyone is right) which holds non-judgment and private faith as higher values than truth.

### ***Grace Theology is about the Church***

Our theology of grace informs and guards our understanding of what is the corporate gathering called the Church. The distinction of truth for corporate application to the Church today versus what was true for Israel in the Old Testament or in the Gospels in a different dispensation is vital. Paul writes about this in his first letter to the believers in Corinth. In chapter 10, he recalls Israel’s history and how God “endured” and yet punished them as a warning for their instruction. “Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did” (10:6, and similarly in 10:11). “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall” (10:12).

He follows with some pointed admonitions about temptation and the faithfulness of God for the present dispensation of the Church, the Body of Christ (10:13). This is also true regarding the practices of the local assembly.

Our theology helps differentiate today's church structure and leadership from that of Israel of the past and from the earthly reign of Christ in future prophecy. It is our theology which gives instruction for the use of spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8), the lack of adherence to the law for any righteousness (Colossians 2:20-23), and the importance of the celebration of the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:17-26). It is our grace theology which describes the absence of sacraments for the present Church age due to the nature of our standing in Christ as complete. I recall a missionary friend who was trying to understand our grace position and fellowship asking me if we had a "charismatic group" within our fellowship. It was easy for me to respond, "No, because they would no longer be a part of our group doctrinally." Our theology and understanding from Scripture

for the present dispensational character of the Church as a distinctive Pauline revelation after Pentecost is our distinguishing attribute. Our theology guides our form of assembly and vision of ministry to the world.

According to the Apostle Paul, and contrary to social trends among America's youth, the Church is incredibly important and valuable. I often quote Ephesians 5 where Paul writes; "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (verse 25). The church, like our wives, are worth dying for! If I love God, then logically I love what God loves – the church! I realize the reference in this passage is to the Universal Church as Christ's Body, but the local church is simply (by Pauline definition) the local manifestation of the Universal Church, not a separate entity.

### ***Our Theology is Inclusive and Unifying***

It is important to realize that the basis of our grace theology is God's inclusive plan for unity with people of all types. Paul has

a very clear, and yet often missed, emphasis in this theology of grace of inclusiveness and unity. He explains this to the Corinthians when they had divisions (1 Corinthians 3:1-9); to the Philippians when they were self-serving in attitude (Philippians 3:1-8); and to the Romans when they were calloused in unity (Romans 15:1-7); as well as in other books with different emphases. Ironically, this major emphasis which shows us how grateful we should be for this theology of grace is often replaced by an emphasis of our “correctness” and the “exclusion” of others from fellowship if they do not see everything in exactly the same way we do! This is a huge failure on our part when we allow our arrogance to override our theology. Would not our theology be much more attractive if it was held and taught with “grace” and demonstrated our high value for fellowship and acceptance? This leads to the last area, our practice of grace.

## Chapter Three

### Our Practice of Grace

This is the really fun part of doing theology – how it works! How unfortunate it is that many of us do not understand that we LIVE our theology every day. What you live out is the clear example for all of what you really believe deep in your heart and mind. It is not just what you espouse in an article such as this or teach in a class. We see the evil in this world, and readily recognize that such people do not have a strong theological belief in God and His nature, human dignity, responsibility, or accountability; which are present throughout the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. We see promiscuity and deception because people do not believe in a holy God and His desire for our respect of others or of our own bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Even more alarming is the present day absence of any theological belief in the authority of the Bible to explain reality versus one's desire for their own personal liberty. We live in a world based on popular pluralism which simply hopes to exclude

no one - therefore is “non-judgmental,” and cannot take any one theology seriously - except the belief in self and personal rationale as the supreme arbiter of truth and good.

Christians, and even those espousing a theology of grace, may write and teach about Scriptural truths, and yet practice something quite contrary. When we do this, it exposes our rhetoric as self-seeking (to be looked upon as spiritual and biblical) rather than grace-filled. I am sorry that even some of our past “grace” writings and teachings were characterized by this type of attack on other brothers for nuances of differences under the guise of “truth seeking.” Let us not fail to realize that “grace” is not simply a message or a theology to believe. This would be contradictory to the truth of Scripture! Paul clearly shows that the Bible is “God-breathed and useful for teaching (doctrine), rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” We love these things as Bible students and teachers, but the passage goes on to say, “SO THAT (this is a common purpose clause in Scripture to show the “why”) the man of

God may be thoroughly equipped (mature), for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

There are some strong, salient implications for our practice in grace:

- *Our theology is to mature and grow us to be more like Christ.* What we believe is translated into Christlikeness due to the power of grace in our lives through the indwelling Holy Spirit. He works in us (Philippians 1:6) because it is His purpose for saving us—to transform us (Romans 12:1, 2). If we are not increasingly kind, accepting, forgiving, committed, truthful, and humble, we aren't living our theology. The fruit of the Spirit is the result of our theology in our own lives (Galatians 5:2-23). Far too long into my faith journey, I came to realize from Scripture that this is practiced and evidenced in relationships. We will never know if we have grown in grace except through genuine relationships which are honest and growing. It just may be true that our “best” theologians are not those sitting in ivory towers teaching or writing, but those who are practicing what they know of the grace of God relationally with others in the Body of

Christ. This is clear from Paul's explanation of growth in Ephesians 4; "Speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is Christ" (verse 15).

- *Our theology is to make us more and more useful to serve Christ and be His ambassadors in the world.* Our maturing is not for our sake, but for God to use us to impact others! I often challenge students at Grace toward this goal. They are caught off-guard when they hear that I don't put high value in the singing and expressing heart-felt devotion to God in chapel or church as a sign of maturity. My mom told me in my teen years when I defended a friend who promised allegiance, "Talk is cheap Kenny, and easy to say." I realize that to merely speak allegiance is elementary and anyone can do it, but a sign of growing up in Christ is being His tool to minister to others. Anything less than this is immature, possibly even carnal, because it is self-serving and does not recognize the "grace" given for serving. Paul says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ (by grace) to DO good works" (Ephesians 2:10), and "Who

gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people...eager to DO what is good” (Titus 2:14).

- *Our theology is not opposed to effort.* Grace is repeatedly juxtaposed with works for earning God’s favor and redemption throughout Paul’s writings. We have already noted this in Ephesians 2:8- 9, but in in Romans 4, the faith of Abraham is held up as an example of “crediting for righteousness.” It is clearly “to the man who does not work, but trusts in God”...and it is “apart from work” (4:5, 6). He goes on to show that the law did not justify anyone, and the promise (given prior to the law of Moses) was an act of grace, and an example of faith (4:14-16) in the manner in which we also have faith – apart from the law or works to save. Dallas Willard points out grace is opposed to earning, not effort. Earning is an attitude (self-reliant and contrary to grace which is God-dependent) whereas effort is an action. This is an interesting distinction which helps me understand my personal dissatisfaction with those who would have us never take any action because we are “grace

believers.” I agree that we are saved by grace, and Paul points out in Colossians 2 (verses 6 and 7) that we also mature by grace, but this not an excuse for complacent resolve to never take any action at all. No, on the contrary, Paul clearly admonishes efforts to “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), as “God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose” (2:13). There is a resultant practice of our faith through the grace given us. The practice of our spiritual gifts (‘charis’ which translated as both grace and gift) is a divine empowerment of God for use and action to build up the Body of Christ (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and 13)! To give no effort as an excuse because the grace of God is “sufficient” is to deny the whole purpose for God’s redeeming and gifting us for His use!

- *Our theology of grace is not a license to sin.* There are many who cannot understand that it is God’s action alone that saves and our action is only to believe. They therefore draw an incorrect conclusion that they have no responsibility at all for their actions.

Thus, there is a lack of incentive to holy living. Paul addresses this in Romans 6, and concluded that to live sinfully is unbefitting a regenerated saint. The Holy Spirit desires to increasingly transform personal and practical holiness to mirror positional holiness by His sanctifying work (2 Corinthians 5:15). The grace believer lives by the internal motivation of gratitude for God's act of redemption rather than by the external motivation of reward or punishment as in past ages. It is interesting to note that motivational studies have repeatedly proven that external motivation is short-lived and shallow compared to internal or intrinsic motivation. By the way, God knew this all along, before social scientists began to study it! Our theology is a motivation for gracious, thankful living, rather than fearful or tentative living. Our theology motivates us to initiate effort to minister to people, preach the message of grace, teach, and live out God's grace in this world.

- *Our theology is never an excuse for laziness.* It is true that our position in Christ is all by grace, and is completely God's ini-

tiative. Paul stated that because of grace he worked hard (1 Corinthians 15:10). His is, as stated above, inspirational for commitment and dedication to what God is about in this world. He is about loving all people. He is about the advancement of the Church. He is about redeeming and transforming people who will in turn, as they mature, do the same. Understanding this burdens the heart for what God's heart aches for, and it mobilizes the mature believer to act by the power of God to advance the priorities of God in this world today.

### **Summary: Consistent Grace**

Consistency exists when our message, our theology, and our practice are clearly apparent to all. If our distinctives are proclaimed or practiced without grace, we simply appear as “old condemning critics” even if there is truth to our teaching. According to the most recent Barna Group study about present cultural trends, being a serious Bible student is looked down upon by a growing sample of the younger American population. Bible stu-

dents/Christians are perceived as “judgmental and mean.” Whether or not this perception is correct is not the point, but it is the very presence of this perception that is important to understand as we seek to teach a new generation the value of our message and theology. The presence and vitriol of these arguments online, as well as in print, between atheists and theologians is a “turn off” to a growing percentage of young Americans who dismiss committed Christian faith due to the language of the arguments and the lack of “grace” exemplified. This shows a need to clearly disagree, but to do so gracefully and respectfully.

Our practice of inclusive grace to invite others to study the Scriptures and learn for themselves about God’s incredible grace and love for all mankind is kind. To allow the Holy Spirit with honesty to bring about conviction of lifestyles is trusting God to do His work. We must engage others to help them learn from the Word. We can offer guidance in a grace hermeneutic to assist others to see how the Bible is understandable when studied from our dispensational perspective.

Our practice cannot be separated from our message or theology, either. We need to base our practice for the local church and our individual conduct solidly in the body of truth for today. The popular vegan culture, which some believers have stated to be God's design for Christians, is not an instruction of this dispensation any more than are the Jewish kosher principles! The understanding of spiritual gifts and their place in personal and church life must also be consistent. The temptation to gravitate to what can be seen and experienced is humanly attractive, but at the same time, it is also quite deceptive.

Our practice cannot be undiscerning, or a denial of truth in any way. Rather, we must graciously hold to the Truth and trust God to illuminate the Scriptures while building relational integrity with others. The grace of God is amazing! Our message, our theology, and our practice is – by God's enablement – capable of transformations where it is applied. It is God's grace and may we believe, seek to understand, hold to, and practice it with great appreciation. Amen.