

## Chapter 6

# The Promises - Grace and Jesus

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:20, "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us." God responds to the war-torn condition of His creation by promising a life of love, freedom, rest, and power to those who will walk with Him. His promises are His answer to sin, the world, and Satan, and man's only source of hope.<sup>36</sup> When God invites us into a relationship with Him and into His Kingdom, He makes certain promises to us. Peter captures the significant role of God's promises in our lives in 2 Peter 1:2-3:

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and excellence. For by these He has granted us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

According to Peter, God exercises His power in us, overthrowing the power of sin, the world, and Satan, and gives us everything we need according to His promises. If He did not keep his promises, we could not walk in everything pertaining to life and godliness. As we learn to walk in His promises, we partake of and have fellowship with the divine nature. That divine nature is God Himself. That divine nature is *His* love, freedom, rest, power, and other qualities that He wants for us.

In the Way of Rest, we learn to actively depend on God and His promises for life. Jesus lived at rest because He believed His Father to be faithful. This promised life requires us to trust God and His way for our lives. Just as He did for the people of Israel who were in the wilderness, God must daily be in our lives or we are not going to survive. We must unquestioningly believe in His promise that He will take care of us. We know He has taught us to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." We know from Genesis to Revelation, He has shown Himself to be fantastically dependable. If we are going to experience victory in the war and intimacy with Him, then we must learn to trust His word for our lives.

Therefore, in what might be the hopeless situation of war and bondage, we are hope-filled because of the faithfulness of God according to His promises. "May the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."<sup>37</sup> We do not have to fear the war because God has responded by promising life and eternal life to those who will follow Him. He speaks into the darkness and offers a

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<sup>36</sup> Another term often used in place of promise is covenant. God is a covenant keeping God. Many see Scripture built on seven different covenants God has made with man. These covenants are the covenant with creation, Adam, Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, and Jesus. The number and names of the covenants can vary, however the principle is the same. *Christ and the Covenants*, by O. Palmer Robertson is a great read on the subject.

<sup>37</sup> Romans 15:13

transformational relationship of love, freedom, rest, and power for those who will obey Him. He shows us that life is absolutely possible today. All things are possible in the Lord.

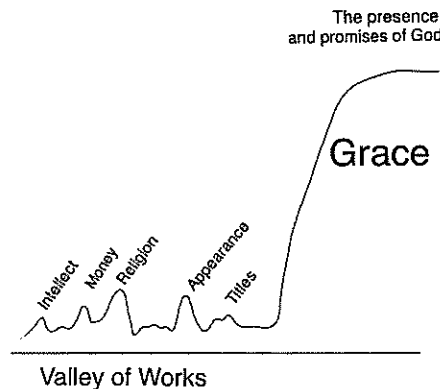
In this chapter we are going to show that the promises of God are ours by grace through the work of Jesus Christ.

### **GOD'S PROMISES COME BY GRACE**

The radical, difficult to believe, reality of God's promises is that He gives them to us by grace. We do not earn and cannot earn what He has for us. Paul writes in Ephesians 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." Our Father invites us into relationship with Him to receive all that He has for us. We cannot earn it. We receive it.

Grace is one of the most amazing and confounding realities of walking with Jesus. God's grace has brought many weary and exhausted people to tears. The Holy Spirit has awakened people to grace and the net transformation has been fantastic. Grace is one of the beautiful gifts from God that all who walk with Him can enjoy.

The following diagram will help us understand how God graciously brings us into His presence and promises:



This diagram depicts what we affectionately call "Grace Mountain." Grace Mountain is a variation of the Eph 1 diagram that focuses on the action of God's grace in raising us and seating us at His right hand. Grace Mountain isolates our raising and draws out grace in contrast to the way of works. By grace alone, we are raised into the presence and promises of God. We do not have to earn the promises of God. We inherit them when we are adopted into His family as His sons/daughters. This diagram contrasts the futility of man's works with the grace of God's love.

We are all born into the valley of works. In this valley we are separated from God, left to strive in our own energy to find the acceptance, security, and significance that every one of us needs. The points listed above in the valley represent different ways a person tries to

achieve peace in their lives. These will be different for each person, but everyone has them. The work required to reach the peak of grace is exhausting and empty, because no matter how hard a person strives in the valley, the efforts will be futile.

The entire book of Ecclesiastes is dedicated to describing the futility of man's efforts to earn blessing in life. Whether a person pursues wisdom, riches, work, pleasure, or any other means apart from God, Solomon concludes that everything is "vanity and striving after wind."<sup>38</sup> This is life lived in the valley of works.

The size of grace mountain compared to the peaks in the valley of works indicates that we are unable to get anywhere near the top of grace mountain. We are absolutely unable to get into the presence of God on our own. This is a laughable task. Furthermore, the size of the mountain shows the distance between the highest of man's highs and the presence of God. God's presence is immeasurably higher than our "works." In Genesis 11, all of man was walking together under the command of God when they decided to stop in the plain of Shinar and build a tower that would reach to heaven. Verse five says that God "came down" to see what man had built. The collective height of man was still nothing compared to the height of God.

Accepting our inability to reach God's presence is a key element to experiencing God's presence on Grace Mountain. No biblical man or woman could have achieved the presence of God, nor been successful in the call of God, by their own merit, skill, or talent. No one. Not a single one of them could have achieved that level. With the grace of God, every single one of them reached the summit of God's presence by grace. Every single one. We must be trained to understand that we cannot climb the mountain without God's grace, and that anything is possible with God's grace.

Another key to being filled with grace is dying to the world and its ways. A person cannot live in grace, yet act according to the world. Paul writes in Galatians 6:15, "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." Circumcision was a practice the Jewish world used to be in right relationship with God. Paul says it contradicts grace and Christians should have nothing to do with it as a practice to being right with God. He writes in Colossians 2:20-21, "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!'" In 1 John the apostle says that we cannot have the Light and walk in darkness. A severing of relationships with the ways of the world and an embracing of God and the way of grace must exist. Who we are and what we have and what we do is no longer earned. Everything in our lives is now affected by the grace of our Father.

### **GRACE EFFECTS**

When I was in middle school my family lived in Colorado Springs, Colorado. We could see Pikes Peak out of our kitchen window. The peak is 14,110 feet above sea level. When a person is at the summit, so many things change just by being there. You can see for miles.

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<sup>38</sup> Ecclesiastes 2:11

You breathe differently. Your perspective changes. These changes happen just by being at the top. A person does not have to force themselves to see things differently.

Being on top of the mountain and filled with grace naturally changes a person. Our experiences are completely different and our perspective will never be the same. All of these changes occur just by the nature of being on top of the mountain. A person's effort does not affect this. This happens organically. Grace changes people. This must be stressed in our walking with Jesus and our making disciples.

The list of changes can go on and on. The Holy Spirit will draw out the changes in each of us. While making disciples, we can utilize Grace Mountain and let our disciples share the changes they see. The most common changes include rest, joyful obedience, intimacy, and power.

**Rest** - Jesus promises us rest in Matthew 11:28-30. Being rescued from the valley of works and living on the mountain of grace brings rest. I am delivered from trying to earn into receiving.

**Joyful obedience** - Paul writes in Romans 6 that if we are truly in grace we cannot go on sinning. We cannot. The nature of grace is transformative. You cannot breathe pollution on the top of a mountain and you cannot continue in sin while living in grace.

**Intimacy** - The top of Grace Mountain can also be a metaphor for the Holy of Holies. In grace I am relaxing into the presence of my Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. I do not have to strive or be perfect or measure up. I just have to breathe and relax and enjoy where I already am.

**Power** - I am living high above the world and its ways. I am living in the presence of God Himself. As the world, the demonic, and even my own sin come after me I exercise the power of mountain living and walk in victory. By the nature of being on top of the mountain I have not been given a "spirit of timidity but of power and love and discipline."<sup>39</sup>

Many other wonderful effects of grace exist in our lives. The Spirit will help us and our disciples see healings, spiritual gifts, and love as well as other manifestations. Grace Mountain must be our foundation, our home base. We must cultivate our lives on this mountain. Grace Mountain can help those who are exhausted to be refreshed by grace. We learn to soak in grace every morning. Because grace is so rare in our lives, learning to walk in it will initially seem awkward. As we daily rest in God's grace, the Holy Spirit will continually change us so that grace becomes natural.

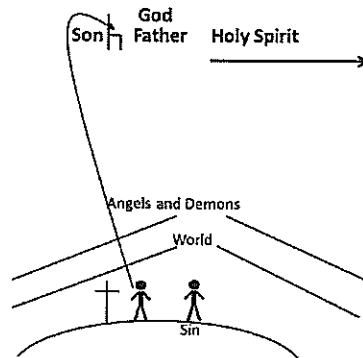
### **THE SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS FOR THE PROMISES OF GOD**

God can give us His promises by grace because of what Jesus Christ has done. The perfect life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus have paid the price for our sin to make the promises of God available to all by grace. If anyone is in Him, they have full access to

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<sup>39</sup> 2 Timothy 1:7

everything God has. We need nothing else. There are no works. There is no effort. If anyone gives his/her life to Jesus, they are raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. He is given every spiritual blessing. He is made new. He is empowered. He is adopted. He enters into the Kingdom of God.



*The sufficiency of Jesus in the Eph 1 Diagram*

Jesus has made the way. He has paid the price. He is the one-time sacrifice. No man, or even the collection of all men, can add a drop of anything to what Jesus has done. His sufficiency is that simple, it does not require much explanation. The sufficiency of Jesus is more about soaking in the very simple reality that He is everything.

The following verses clearly show the sufficiency of Jesus:

**Jesus' defeat of sin** - Romans 6:5-7, "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."

**Jesus' defeat of the world** - John 16:33, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

**Jesus' defeat of Satan** - 1 John 3:8, "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."

**Jesus' access to the Father** - John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.'"

**Jesus and our sanctification** - Hebrews 10:10, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

**Jesus and the temple** - Hebrews 10:19-22, “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

**Jesus and our new life** - Galatians 6:14-15 “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

The biblical witness to the sufficiency of Jesus is overwhelming. The presence and promises of God that we receive as we live on Grace Mountain have been made available by Jesus alone. We rest in Him. Because He is raised, we too can be raised. We thank our Father for sending Him, and we thank Him for coming. He is everything to us. This is not complicated or difficult. Were it not for Jesus, God's promises would not be available to us.

### **JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT**

One additional word on Jesus will be helpful in understanding the Way of Rest. Jesus lived His life full of the Holy Spirit.<sup>40</sup> In His life and ministry, He never attributed anything He did to being the Son of God. What He did, He did according to the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit as King in the Kingdom.

Consider the following two verses:

And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:16-21<sup>41</sup>

And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand? If I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's

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<sup>40</sup> *The Presence and the Power: the Significance of the Holy Spirit in the Life and Ministry of Jesus* by Gerald Hawthorne is a great study on this subject.

<sup>41</sup> Jesus quotes from Isaiah 61:1-2. See also Isaiah 11:1-2 and following and Isaiah 42:1 and following for two other verses demonstrating that the Messiah would come in the power of the Holy Spirit.

house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

Matthew 12:25-29

In both verses, Jesus attributes His ministry to the work of the Holy Spirit in Him. We also see the infilling of the Spirit in the Eph 1 diagram. What we see in Jesus is life perfectly submitted to the Holy Spirit according to the will of His Father. Jesus walked in Trinitarian balance. The same power that worked in Him is poured out on us by the Father when we give our lives to the Son.

### **CONCLUSION ON GRACE AND THE SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS**

Because grace is so rare in our relationships, walking in God's grace can be awkward. We are accustomed to receiving based on performance. Resting in the truth that God has given us His promises by grace should be continually liberating. As a disciple we must be regularly reminded that we are saved by grace and we walk by grace. Allowing the Holy Spirit to teach us how to walk in grace will prepare us to show others how to as well.

As we go to make disciples we will encounter many people, including Christians, who are exhausted. They spend their lives trying to please others and earn whatever they can get. Christians often embrace the lie that whatever they are doing is not enough for the Lord. So they plunge head first into more and more works. Grace is a counter-cultural phenomenon that God will use to deliver people out of the fatigue of life.

The sufficiency of Jesus can be difficult for us to accept because most of us are poor receivers. We do not like people doing things for us that we cannot return. We work hard to keep the balance sheet in our relationships equal. Yet, Jesus has done something for us we can never repay. There is no equaling His work on the cross. In Jesus are all the promises of God. When we come to faith in Him, we receive Him and our Father's promises by the Spirit. He has done the work.

So far we have seen God respond to the war between the Kingdoms by offering us life in Him by His promises. We have seen that those promises can be ours by grace through the sufficiency of Jesus. The next chapter will consider God's faithfulness to deliver on His promises and examine four specific promises for our lives.

