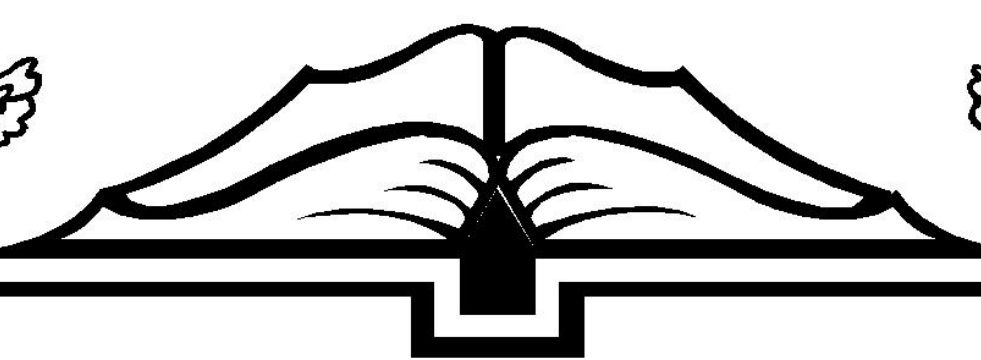




A Story of Grace

*Seeing Christ
In All and through All*

*God is able to make
all grace abound ...
-11 Corinthians 9:8*



**Speaker Carol Helland
Ladies' Bible Retreat
March 5-7, 2020**

A Story of Grace: Seeing Christ in All and through All

Part I

Introduction

The Lord knows our unique and extenuating circumstances, and His grace remains a constant, on our good days and bad. He loves us; He understands; He cares; He invites us to come to Him for help; and He promises a future and a hope . . . a real, living present hope—in the here and now—rooted in the Savior.

By submitting willingly to God's plan in God's way in God's timing, you will see that

He Is the God of ALL GRACE.

Definitions

I think "grace"¹ is one of the most beautiful words in the Bible other than the name of "Jesus." "Grace" means *God's graciousness; His favor toward you; His loving-kindness demonstrated by the gift of His Son.*

When you look at the definitions of "all"² you'll find expansive meanings. As an **adjective** in the English, it means: *the whole; nothing but; completely taken up with;* as a **pronoun** it means *everybody; everything.*

☞ *You can never learn that Christ is all you need, until Christ is all you have. ~ Corrie ten Boom³*

☞ *My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they ALL were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. ~ Psalm 139:15-16*



Our story begins in this manner and is authored every day with God's loving hand. Before you were born, He knew the plot; He knew the characters who would fill your story; and He determined the setting.

Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see. ~ Corrie ten Boom

☞ For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. ~ Romans 3:23

^{1 2 3}See appendix.

There is none righteous, no, not one. ~ Romans 3:10

For by the works of the law no one will be justified in His sight. ~ Romans 3:20

We're all unable; we are all guilty; and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves, no matter how "good" we may think to be. None of us is good in God's eyes and none of us can satisfy His holy requirements. It is an inescapable and humbling reality.

The Good News: God loved me and did not leave me in this hopeless condition. God let me see my condition, so I could value His remedy.



Justified Freely by His Grace

*Being *justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ~ Romans 3:24, 28*

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God; not of works, lest anyone should boast. ~ Ephesians 2:8-9

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. ~ II Corinthians 5:21

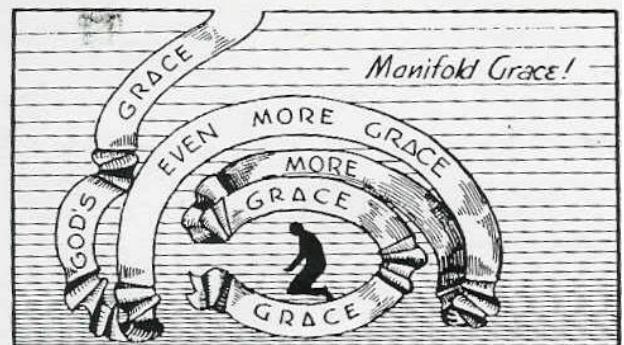
***Justification:** Originates in grace; a new legal standing before God in which, instead of being under the condemnation of sin, the justified believer stands before God in the righteousness of Christ. You are justified by faith in the completed, finished, sufficient work of Christ on the Cross. It's all a gift of God's redeeming grace.

Grace Abounds

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. ~ Romans 5:20

Grace was not an addition to God's plan; grace was a part of God's plan from the very beginning. ~ Warren Wiersbe

God's grace abounded even more than sin—adequate to deal with everyone's sin. Even though sin is present, God's grace is greater than all your sin through the righteousness of Christ.



For God So Loved

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. ~ John 3:16



It is a very surprising thing when you first hear that Christ died for ME. Even to this day, the greatest wonder that I ever heard is that God so loved me that He gave His only begotten Son, so if I believed on Him, I would have everlasting life. Having been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I could withdraw trust from my powerless works and claim the Lord Jesus' work on the Cross.

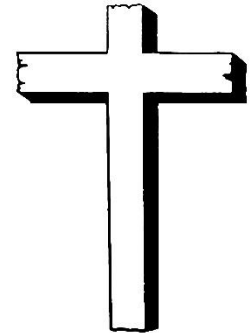
Our Substitute

And He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. ~ I Peter 2:24

Jesus bore our sins in His own body so that we could rest in a righteousness that is not our own, but a righteousness that fully satisfies God's requirement—Christ's righteousness.

Nothing in my hand I bring; Simply to Thy Cross I cling. ~ Rock of Ages

We had been justified, fully forgiven. Salvation is free; it's a gift—it didn't cost us anything to be saved, but it cost God the life of His Son. Justification brings to us a peaceful relationship with God Himself—all by grace.



Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ~ Romans 8:35-37



*I have come that they might have life and they might have it more abundantly. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given me I should lose **nothing** but raise it up at the last day. ~ John 6:39*

My faith rests not upon what I am, or shall be, or feel, or know, but in what Christ is, in what He has done and in what He is now doing for me. ~ Charles Spurgeon

***The Holy Spirit: Our Helper**

In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. ~ Ephesians 1:13

*The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Triune Godhead; He is a power Who dwells within believers, teaches them through the Word, and brings to remembrance the Lord Jesus;



intercedes in prayers; and guides them. To have the Spirit of God is to have Christ: "Christ in me; the hope of glory."
~ Colossians 1:27

The Spirit of God was given to glorify the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you. ~Corrie ten Boom

☞ **May your love for Christ increase.**

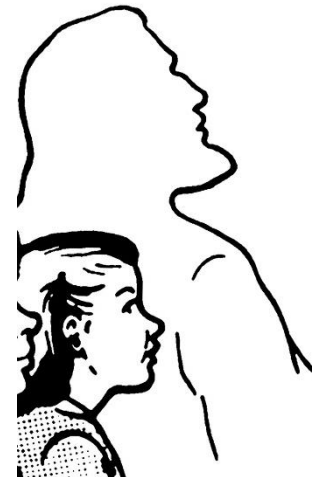
Whether I am walking in the bright light of His presence, or abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, I know that He is not only with me, He is in me." ~ Corrie ten Boom

☞ **What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will he not also with Him graciously give us all things? ~ Romans 8:31-32**

God the Father is for us; the Son is for us; the Holy Spirit will help us. And God will make all things work together for us. We have this confidence.

☞ **Jesus died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him Who died for them and rose again.**
~ II Corinthians 5:15

When we believed on Christ, grace radically changed our identity, for we are now in Christ. We are clothed in His righteousness. My identity should no longer be in what I achieve, or what I wear, or what the people around me think about me. No, my identity is now rooted in the Savior and His achievements and what He thinks about me.



☞ **Praying Always with All Prayer**

*Praying **always** with **all** prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with **all** perseverance and supplication for **all** saints." ~ Ephesians 6:18*

"Praying always": Never quit praying. God likes us to give Him no rest. May I encourage you to keep a prayer journal with people and events recorded for which to pray. And also look back, at times, to see how God answered. The Lord Jesus said we **"ought always to pray and not lose heart."**

Don't pray when you feel like it. Have an appointment with the Lord and keep it. A woman is powerful on her knees. ~ Corrie ten Boom



Grace That Helps

The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. ~ Romans 8:26

Words on Prayer

Words of advice written years ago on a memo pad to encourage a Christian friend:

Do you involve God in your prayer? Do you find handholds and footholds in His character? Do you plead with Him on the basis of Who He is? Consider again His justice, His mercy, His faithfulness, His wisdom, His purity, His might and His tenderness. If you're hurting or if you're confused, find some attribute of your great God and grab onto it with all your might, asking Him to deal with you accordingly. Humbly hold Him to His promise. God is delighted when you seek His will, His character, His glory—and, yes, His heart—in your prayers. Pick an attribute of God—wisdom, mercy, purity, tenderness, justice, or some other character quality of your Lord. Meditate for a few moments on how marvelously God reveals Himself through that attribute. In your prayers during the rest of the day—whether for your family or friends, for emergencies or incidentals—link all your requests to that special attribute of your heavenly Father. Not only will your prayers have power, but you will get to know God more intimately.

~ Mrs. Donna Radtke - Went home to her Savior: September 18, 1991

Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God. ~Corrie ten Boom

 **Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

~ Psalm 37:4

Don't worry today but trust in the Lord. Delight in Him.
And watch how your desires become His desires.

Because the Lord is always near, you can rest in the One Who has everything figured out for your good and His glory. You can trust Him because He is worthy of your trust. He is gracious, faithful, compassionate, powerful, loving, forgiving, caring, tender-hearted. His lovely descriptions never end. Delight in Him!



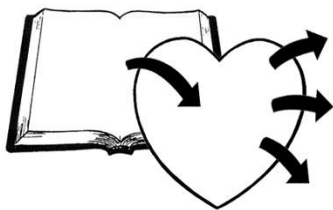
☞ *Trust in the Lord with **all** your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In **all** your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. ~ Proverbs 3:5-6*

God's ways in our lives are incomprehensible; yet He is trustworthy. This is not a mere nod-to-God but an intimate trust of God in **ALL** His ways, trusting that He brings us to our appointed path and purpose. All the wisdom we may acquire can never replace the need to trust our God.

☞ *God had answered "exceedingly abundantly above **all** that we ask or think, according to the **power** that works in us." ~ Ephesians 3:20*

Notice the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, made available through God the Son. Look at the words in this verse to picture the vastness of God's Power—Christ's Power—His resurrection Power which is so great He arose from the dead and ascended into the heaven.

His power is far above all power available to us—above our understanding or measure. And that is the kind of power you and I need. It is available every moment. The Holy Spirit releases the resurrection power in our lives as we trust Him. What a gift of His grace! He is able to do **ALL—above ALL—abundantly above ALL**.



☞ **The Word of Christ**

*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in **all** wisdom. ~ Colossians 3:16*

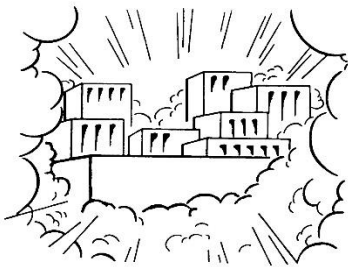
Allow the Word of God to dwell or "feel at home" in your heart. And as you do, you'll find how rich the Word is to you with **ALL** its treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

☞ *Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. ~ Jeremiah 15:16*

The prophet Jeremiah had a very difficult ministry and sometimes "lamented" to the Lord about his life. Jeremiah had to learn to walk by faith, as do we, and God's Word gave him just the spiritual nourishment he needed when he needed it—and that brought him great joy.



If you look at the world, you'll be distressed. If you look within, you'll be depressed. But if you look at Christ, you'll be at rest. ~Corrie ten Boom



☞ **Mansion over the Hilltop**

*I'm satisfied with just a cottage below
A little silver and a little gold
But in that city where the ransomed will shine
I want a gold one that's silver lined.*

☞ **All Your *Need**

*And my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.
~ Philippians 4:19*

"I know how to be abased and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned [to be content]." ~ Philippians 4:12

I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me. ~ Philippians 4:13

*Often our need is of that of the heart. We may fail to see that, for we look for "need" in all the wrong places: We think a new house or car or money or a job or health or a person or a baby will meet that need when God wants to give us Himself. And He is ready and able to supply that need, and we then learn contentment as we rest in Him.

We all have unique needs as God sees it. I don't know what your need is. But God does. God has promised to supply **ALL your need**. Now trust God to "do **all things** through Christ Who strengthens you."



In Your Hand

But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God. My times are in Your hand.'
~ Psalm 31:14-15

What a very personal verse! You are not only in the hand of the Lord, but in all that surrounds you, for your moments, or "times," are under divine arrangement. When our times are in His hand, we can trust Him.

All the way my Savior leads me; What have I to ask beside?

*Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who thro' life has been my guide?
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell;
For I know, whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.*
~ Fanny Crosby



Doubt can come if we are not taking up the whole armor of God and the shield of faith to protect us from the fiery darts of the wicked one. Satan wants us to doubt God, for he knows that you don't go to someone you doubt. But in the midst of our discouragement, the Lord delivers us from doubt and replaces it with a promise and hope.

All-Sufficient Grace

My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. ~ II Corinthians 12:9

Remind yourself that the Lord Jesus rules over everything in your life.

Grab ahold of the awareness that God is good. And everything He does for you is good. Give thanks to the Lord for He is . . . **good**.

The God of Hope

We have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ~ Romans 5:2

You can live with all joy and peace through His transforming grace; He will complete the good work that was begun in you upon salvation. We are life-long learners of His grace, and He knows that, so He patiently teaches us about Himself—*seeing Christ in all and through all*.



God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. ~ II Corinthians 9:8

A Story of Grace: Seeing Christ in All and through All

Part II

Introduction

God is writing your story of grace every day, which began from when you were born; where you have lived; the situations and circumstances and people who weave their way throughout your life; and even the length of your days. He is the "Author and Finisher of your faith."

~ Hebrews 12:2 At the Cross, Jesus won the greatest battle ever fought and has graciously included you and me in that victory . . . all by His grace.

☞ *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* ~ John 1:14

Jesus never analyzed or defined grace; instead, He communicated and demonstrated grace and love through His encounters with people and His death on the Cross. He was full of grace and truth.



☞ Ministry from the Lord Jesus

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ~ Acts 20:24



God has a special plan for you and your life. There is no limitation to what the Risen Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father, through His Spirit, can do through you and with you.

☞ Grow in Grace

May we grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. ~ II Peter 3:18

How do we grow in grace?

☞ God's Word

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby. ~ I Peter 2:2

1. **God's divine grace and knowledge is released in our lives through His inspired Word.**



Prayer

Come to the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. ~ Hebrews 4:16

2. Prayer is God's second means of grace growth.

The God of All Grace

And the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

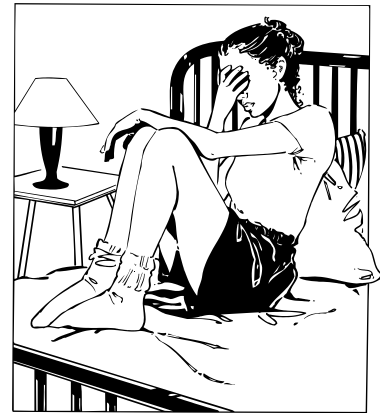
~ I Peter 5:10

3. Trials or suffering is the third area in which the Holy Spirit works to grow us in grace.

Many people are confused about trials because God does not spare us from illnesses, tragedies, and hardships, or disappointments. Nor does He usually tell us why He allows these to happen. And that's hard because we want our lives to be more predictable; easier; and, yes, at times, comfortable.

But because we live in a world marred by sin, no one escapes the trials and sorrows it brings. So what do we do about that? As believers, how do we make suffering work for us and not against us? How will suffering help us to grow in His grace and knowledge?

God uses the difficulties, brokenness, heartache and trials of this world to complete His work in you. "He gives more grace when the burdens grow greater." And what is that grace? The grace of transformation—the good work that He has begun in you, conforming you into the image of Christ.



☞ [He] works **all things** after the counsel of His own will. ~ Ephesians 1:11



Get up in the high mountains to view the depths of His riches. View the everlasting love of your Father towards you in Christ. Remind yourself of what God did on Calvary for you and that His love continues for you each day every day.

God's love comes down to us from His heart, the essence of the eternal love of God dwelling there and coming through Him to us—and nothing can exhaust it. He will never let us go. His love does not depend on our reciprocation or response. It is not our love that holds God, but God's that holds us. Not our love to Him, but His to us.

By His love, we shall be kept steadfast; unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, gaining by our losses; succeeding by our failures; triumphing in our defeats; and ever more conquerors through Him Who loved us.

Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. ~ I Peter 5:7

Some knowledge is too heavy . . . you cannot bear it . . . your Father will carry it until you are able. -Corrie ten Boom

We know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ~ Romans 8:18



Grace and glory go together, as does suffering and glory.

☞ The Peace of His Presence



*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and **God of all comfort**, Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* ~ II Corinthians 1:3-4

What is so lovely about God's love is that He comforts us in all our tribulation. Praise God! He is the God of **ALL** comfort. He puts strength in our hearts to trust Him when we need Him the most. And then we realize all that God is to us.

☞ Love Abounds

*And we are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting because your faith grows exceedingly, and **the love** of every one of you **all abounds** toward each other.*
~ II Thessalonians 1:3

Christian friends are such a gift of God's abounding love toward us.


A Friend Loves

A friend loves at all times. ~ Proverbs 17:17

Only a believer can have such a friend, for it's "the love of God shed abroad in her heart through the power of the Holy Spirit."



Grace in Singleness⁴

 "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." ~ Matthew 11:29-30

Singleness does not define us; God does. Our identity is in Christ. Our God, our Savior, is our everything. His grace and love are truly sufficient in all and through all. It's so important to thank the Lord daily for what He provides and how He cares for us. Thankfulness allows us to see Christ.



Moment by Moment

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love; Moment by moment I've life from above; Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine; Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine. ~ D.W. Whittle

In life, whatever our season, we don't often live in the big moments but the little ones. The hymn "Moment by Moment" traces those moments of living with Jesus.

Grace in Marriage

Marriage is a life-work, and its love is worked out through the moments, days, weeks, years, events and people that grace its path.



Tenderhearted Forgiveness

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ~ Ephesians 4: 31-4:1

Trust in Him at all times; pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us. ~ Psalm 62:8

Forgiveness is such an integral part of a marriage. We are a changed people, and the One Who changed us is Jesus Christ. Can we not allow the Lord to change the person who grieved us so? It may not be over night . . . it may take years. We just don't know, but God does.

Do you know what hurts so very much? It's love. Love is the strongest force in the world, and when it is blocked that means pain. There are two things we can do when this happens. We can kill that love so that it stops hurting. But then of course part of us dies, too. Or we can ask God to open up another route for that love to travel. [Christ's] love is larger than the walls which shut it in. ~Corrie ten Boom

⁴See Appendix for Mrs. Erb's writings on Singleness and Widowhood.

Forgiveness does not abolish the consequences of what others have done, but it puts us right with God which gives us the ability to move on.

Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth to those things which are before. ~ Philippians 3:13

Grace of Life

*. . . Being heirs together of the **grace of life**.* ~ I Peter 3:7

Live under the umbrella of grace in your marriage. Extend grace to each other every day. Remind yourself that you married a sinner. And your husband did, too. However, acknowledging daily the central Person in your marriage, the Lord Jesus, takes your focus off your problems and disagreements and unto Him. You are "heirs together of the grace of life." ~I Peter 3:7 You are a team—Each for the other and both for Christ.



Love and Respect

Let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself; and let the wife see that she respects her husband.
~ Ephesians 5:32

That's grace in action because neither one of us has earned love or respect. We make multiple mistakes; disappoint far too often; criticize when we shouldn't. But according to Ephesians 5: 32, it isn't based on a merit system or law-keeping. It's based on love and grace. That's how the *Gospel of Grace* affects our marriage in the here and now.

☞ . . . *That Your Prayers Be Not Hindered*

It is so important to
And pray together.
thank the Lord for
husband is *God's*
God's gift to your



pray for your husband.
When you're praying,
each other. Your
gift to you, and you are
husband.

And children are a bonus gift that comes into a marriage. They are a gift from the Lord.

Grace in the Home

☞ *Children are a heritage from the LORD; the fruit of the womb is a reward. ~ Psalm 127:3*

Usually, a mother's love for her children is greater than her love for herself—that is a picture of Christ's love for us. Many of the most faithful ministries in the world are some of the smallest. And such is true for a mother. The mother's ministry to her children is quite often unseen and unappreciated but not to God—this is no small thing.



MA Degree: Major Adjustment Degree

Kids are like sponges. They absorb all your strength and leave you limp. Give 'em a squeeze, and you'll get it all back. ~ Arthur Linehan: The Best of Bits and Pieces.

I think what a mother values most from her children is thankfulness. I know that is true for our heavenly Father; He delights when we thank Him. And it is true for mothers.

The Lord is referred to as the God Who gives endurance. He promises to be the source of strength and comfort for your own heart in the midst of a busy schedule.



☞ **You will mess up at times, but God is faithful.**

Faithful is He Who calls You Who also will do it.

~ I Thessalonians 5:24

This is **practical sanctification**, a dealing with our failures and a growth in grace. God is faithful to bring to completion the work He has begun in you. God does not save someone and then leave her alone to work out her Christian life by herself. So practically, His grace frees you from having to prove your worth as a mother.

☞ **Even on your hardest days, the Lord is with you, and nothing is unnoticed by Him.**

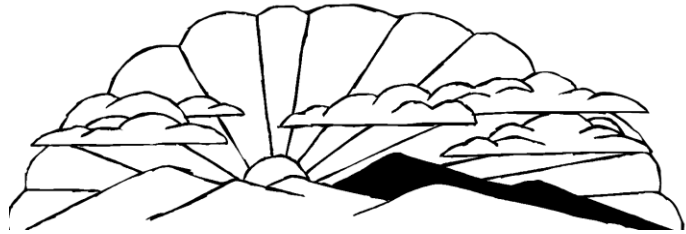
Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. ~ I Corinthians 15:58

Because of grace, your life is under His loving care. Each day can become blessings of His grace as He works everything together for your spiritual good and your children's.

☞ **His mercies are new every morning—**

especially when your morning arrives far earlier than expected.

*It is of the Lord's *mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassion fails not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ~ Lamentations 3:22-23*



***Mercies:** God's resource of compassion, kindness and forgiveness

God blesses us each morning with His favor and lovingkindness. When you remember His mercies, you remind yourself that you did nothing to earn His mercies—they are given all by His grace. That's why grace and mercy are such beautiful companions.

☞ **No matter what you're experiencing, God is working on your behalf.**

For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. ~ Philippians 2:13

Our hope is not to be found in our ability to endure . . . to get to the next phase in the child's development from diapers to toddler to middle school to teenager to high school graduate and beyond. Our hope is in the Lord.

☞ **The Lord Jesus desires a relationship with you.**

I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. ~ John 15:15

God, Who is love, showers a mother every day with love and grace that does not quit, even on her most unloving days.



Conclusion

The Believer's Riches in Christ

*That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding **riches of His grace** in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ~ Ephesians 2:7*

We were spiritually poor before we met Christ, and we were totally bankrupt. But now that we have trusted in Christ as our Savior, we share in all His riches! We are "heirs of God," and "joint heirs with Jesus Christ." He became poor to make us rich. What a story of grace!

*For you know **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.*

~ II Corinthians 8:9

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. ~ Revelation 22:21



If you look at the last sentence in the Bible, in Revelation 22:21, you'll find two words that are so precious to us: the word "**grace**" and the word "**all**."

Dear Friends: Let Christ be your all in all, and let grace be always where you live. Remind yourself often that God is lovingly writing your story of grace day by day, moment by moment.

*May the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in [us] and [we] in Him, according to the **grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.** ~ II Thessalonians 1:12*

Grace Will Lead Us Home

*Through many dangers, toils and snares;
We have already come;
T'was grace that brought us safe thus far;
And grace will lead us home.*

~ Amazing Grace

Appendix

¹GRACE (*charis*):

God's kindness and love on undeserving sinners demonstrated by the gift of His Son.

Grace is God's tailor-made provision for every area of our lives—free without obligation. Grace permits us to serve Him without trying to earn brownie points—opposite of legalism and merit.

Grace speaks not of what we do for God, but what God does for us. It is the kindness and love of God toward us, where **all** that we have and are is provided through Christ:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

Grace appears **171 times** in the English Bible: **156 times** in the New Testament.

²All

For such a tiny word, the **adjective** "all" and the **pronoun** "all" have expansive meanings.

As an **adjective** in the English, it means: the whole; nothing but; completely take up with; and as a **pronoun** it means everybody; everything.

Greek Definition: (*adjective*) - *pas*: (used as an adjective or pronoun); every kind of; full; absolute, greatest; entire, whole; *ola*: always, continually, forever; *Kata*: in everything, in every respect

Greek Definition (*pronoun*): everyone, everything

The word "all" is found **5,606 times** in the English Bible, **982** in the New Testament. It's the **22nd most** frequently used word in Scripture.

³**Corrie ten Boom:** She, too, has a story of grace. If you don't know her story, I encourage you to read her autobiography *The Hiding Place*, which recounts the narrative of how she found hope in the Lord while she was imprisoned.

Corrie was a Dutch watchmaker and later a writer who worked with her father, her sister Betsie, and other family members to help many Jews escape the Nazi Holocaust during World War II by hiding them in her home. They were caught, arrested, and sent to Ravensbruck concentration camp.

I trust quotes from her throughout this booklet will encourage you as they uplift our Savior.

⁴Mrs. Erb's writings on Singleness and Widowhood

Singleness

"If only I could be married, I'd be happy!" When I hear someone say that, I feel like asking, "Why aren't you happy now?" A woman who is unhappy or discontented as a single person is not apt to find that marriage would live up to her expectations.

The problem is one of attitude—self-centeredness. A woman should not desire marriage for the purpose of having someone to cater to her needs or desires. Rather, she should be thinking of whether she could enrich the life of her husband if the Lord would grant one for her. Instead of feeling that her virtues are being overlooked, she should be more concerned about letting the Lord make her into the kind of person who would be a desirable partner for a worthy man. A discontented woman will not be an encouragement to friendship, nor a desire to know her better.

Contentment is a matter of choice. The Apostle Paul states, ". . . *I have learned in whatsoever state I am, wherewith to be content.*" (Phil. 4:11b) Paul was in jail when he wrote that! Contentment can be learned, regardless of circumstances. I Tim. 6:6 reminds us, "*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*" Whether married or single, our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ is the key to finding satisfaction in life. When we find our joy in having a close walk with the Lord, it really doesn't matter whether we are married or single.

I can speak from "both sides of the fence." I was contented being single. Although I was not looking for a husband, the Lord brought one to me when I was twenty-six years of age. After twenty-one years of a satisfying marriage, the Lord took my partner Home—and then I was single again. I've spent more years being single than married, both before and after marriage. It has been my experience that as long as the Lord Jesus Christ is central in a person's life, the single person can be just as joyful, contented, and fulfilled as those who are married. I do not envy those who are happily married—and when I see or hear of those who have marital problems, I'm glad I'm single! "It's better to be single than to wish you were!" That saying could be verified by too many persons!

Although a successful marriage has its advantages, so does a single life. It is simpler for an unmarried woman to spend more time in prayer and in the Word of God than for a woman who has a husband and family to care for. With fewer responsibilities, there is more freedom to help in the activities of the local church, and to be available for counseling, for extending hospitality, and for fulfilling a ministry of prayer. In our busy modern age there is much need for prayer for missionaries, our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as the unsaved around the world, our homes, our nation,

ourselves—the list is endless. There is no lack of things to do, as we're told in Eph. 5:16 to be "Redeeming the time because the days are evil." Certainly if we look around for opportunities to serve, there is no room for boredom.

Whether married or single, we can discover blessings in the common things of life. Do we take time to enjoy a beautiful sunrise or sunset; the songs of the birds or the chorus of the frogs in the spring; the loveliness or fragrance of the flowers in bloom? Do we take God's creation for granted without appreciating it? Are we thankful that we have all of our senses to enjoy all that the Lord has provided? How we react makes a difference in our view of life in general.

We can develop a thankful attitude for blessings great or small. If we grumble or complain because of what we don't have, we show that we are ungrateful. Unthankfulness is a sin. In Romans chapter 1, we read of the seriousness of sin. Verse 21 states, "Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful . . ." The rest of the chapter describes the gross sins that followed. Ingratitude indicates that we really don't believe that what God has chosen for us is best. We seem to think that if we had our way, we could do a better job of ordering our lives than God does! In Ps. 84:11b the Psalmist wrote, ". . . No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Do we really believe that? If so, we can be contented with our lot in life.

A missionary lady who had never married remarked, "I think a husband must be a no good thing." "Why do you say that?" asked her friend.

"Because Ps. 84:11 says, 'For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.' I've lived an upright life and the Lord hasn't given me a husband. So what other conclusion could I come to?"

The little chorus, J-O-Y (Jesus and Others and You) has a practical message. If you put Jesus first, others second, and yourself last, you will have real joy. Most people put themselves first, so is it any wonder that they miss God's best?

If you are still without a life-partner, just patiently wait upon the Lord, with the assurance that His plans are always best. His timing is perfect. Cheerful acceptance of the Lord's will for your life will be reflected in everything you do. Is it His will for you to have a husband? If so, in His time He will provide one for you. Is it His will for you to remain single? If so, accept the challenge gracefully and make the most of the opportunities it will bring to serve Him. (Having a "pity party" won't help!) In either case, remember Phil. 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!" You can rejoice, if you will. The choice is yours.

Thoughts Concerning Widowhood

Since statistics show that women outlive men by five years, married women should not be surprised if sooner or later widowhood is their lot. Some widows find this time much more difficult than others. Every case is different. However, for a person who knows and trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ, even this time can be a challenge and an opportunity to display the sufficiency of God's grace. I found it so.

I have been a widow for thirty-five years and I know that God keeps His promises to care for His children. Theoretically, I knew that the Lord would give grace to face bereavement and the adjustments to follow. But it was during the time that I actually went through the experience that my faith was strengthened, and I knew experientially what I had previously believed. 2 Cor. 12:9 "*My grace is sufficient for thee . . .*" was indeed true. Being fortified by God's Word, I could rest in His precious promises. The God of All Comfort was very real to me, and He gave unexplainable peace.

We have a tendency to remember the pleasant things and to forget the unpleasant happenings of the past. That is good, since we can't change them anyway, and our attitude about the past can greatly influence our future. But what were the early days of my widowhood really like? I decided to re-read what I had written in my diary in 1965 during the first year following my husband's home-going. I wanted to detect the general flavor of the new phase of my life. What did I find? Loneliness? Devastation? Complaint? Self-pity? No, not at all! Instead, I found purposeful activity and satisfaction.

Life must go on. By keeping busy, there was no time for self-pity. Adjustments had to be made—the transfer of the title of the car, insurance, oil changes, and other common affairs of life. My husband and I had been involved in enrolling children in the Scripture Memory Program of the Rural Bible Crusade (now Bible Impact Ministries). At that time we were still making contacts with the pupils in schools that were under the jurisdiction of the County Superintendents of Schools, even though consolidation of schools made it increasingly difficult. Since we had done this together, I simply continued alone.

I discovered from my diary that in 1965 I had contacted schools in seven counties in Minnesota and four counties in North Dakota. That summer I had taught seven VBS's and conducted the week of RBC Camp near Bemidji. (Camp was the final award for those completing the Bible memory work or the required Bible lessons.) Going by bus, I had also attended the RBC Workers' Conference for four days in Wheaton, Illinois, where National RBC headquarters were located at that time.

Throughout the year, there were letters to write, Bible lessons to check, prayer-newsletters to send, calls to make, speaking engagements in various places to show slides of RBC work, etc. Any spare time could be used for making flash-card stories or illustrated songbooks such as we use in VBS. I still managed to make three trips to visit my relatives—at Easter, in September, and Christmas.

Our National RBC had recommended my moving from Minneapolis where I lived to an area farther west, closer to the Dakotas. After checking several places, I moved to Alexandria in October of 1965 where I got settled in a rooming house owned by my friends, Kenneth and Hazel Clark. That is where I lived for the next nine years before moving to the Iron Range. Adjustments continued—new areas, new friends, and as time went by, I could no longer make contacts through the schools. Children could still be contacted through VBS, Bible clubs, or other ways, and summers were still full of VBS and Camp.

As I was going through my diary, I was reminded again of the Lord's care. I had planned to go to Wisconsin on September 1, so I filled my car's gas tank on the previous day. On my trip when I came near Hudson, I felt that I might as well get some gas at the last station before entering Wisconsin where gas was higher, even though I hadn't traveled very far. Imagine my surprise when the gas pump kept on pumping and pumping and pumping—19 gallons! Thieves during the night had not only stolen the gas but had also broken the gas gauge, which had still registered FULL as I had expected it would be. How gracious the Lord was to keep me from being stranded on the freeway, wondering what could be wrong with my '64 Chev! Only the Lord knows how many times He kept me from other problems or dangers that I wasn't even aware of at the time.

I think that the Lord has given special care to widows. In both the Old Testament and in the New Testament, provisions were made for widows. For examples, see such passages as Ex. 22:22, Deut. 24:17, Deut. 24:19-21, Ps. 68:5, Acts 6:1-3, I Tim. 5:16, or James 1:27. It would have been more difficult in those days than today for widows to make a living. Yet even the aged widow, the prophetess Anna, served the Lord in the temple night and day, according to Luke 2:30-38. She could pray! That option is open to God-fearing widows today as well.

The Lord was extra gracious in preparing me for being a widow. My husband and I had always worked together in RBC work, so I could just continue in it. For the last five years or so of his life, he knew of his heart problem so by this time I was used to carrying suitcases, VBS supplies, loading and unloading the car, etc. The Lord blessed me with good health, so that was no problem.

Another thing that made the transition easier was that I had been made aware of the time when I would need to be prepared—even before it happened. My husband had often said, "I won't always be here, so you will need to know this." How wise he was! In December of 1964 when he went to be with the Lord, it meant a lot to me to know his wishes concerning his burial. In September he had told me that he didn't want to be buried in Minneapolis, but rather in the cemetery in Pittsville, Wisconsin, which was my hometown! "You have to think of the living," he had stated.

Of course we didn't know when he would reach the end of his earthly journey, but the Lord did, and He graciously kept us from being involved in an accident. Norman's heart attack occurred while he was stopped at a red light on a busy street in Minneapolis as we were on our way to spend Christmas in Wisconsin—God's perfect timing—Home for Christmas!

Widowhood would be much more complicated if bereavement was totally unexpected, or if young children were involved. My niece, Sue, lost her husband in December of 1996 after Larry's fight with leukemia for several years. That had involved chemo treatments, bone marrow transplant, illness, hospitalization, and uncertainty with the ups and downs of the disease. It was very hard on the four children ranging in age from six years to high school age. The grieving process was especially hard for the two youngest children. This had been a very close family, and the children missed their dad so much. Sue had also been home-schooling the children, but that had to be discontinued—another change for the family. Before her marriage, Sue had worked as an RN, so after a year, she updated her nursing skills and is now working again as an RN. She loves her work, but it is difficult for a single parent with all the responsibility. They have bought a home, the oldest daughter is now in her second year at a Christian college, and the second daughter will be attending the same college next year. Adjustments seem to have been made very well by this time. Through all the testing and trials, their firm faith in the Lord Jesus Christ was displayed, and the church with which they are associated has been a tremendous help to the family in every way. What would a young widow do if she were unsaved and lacked such help and encouragement at such a time!

Thus widowhood varies. Perhaps some of you who are attending this Retreat have gone through bereavement and experienced widowhood, and you know from experience what it means to enter another phase of life. You may be able to minister to someone else who faces a similar situation. Since widowhood is still a possibility for any married woman, it would be wise to think ahead to be better prepared—but don't be gloomy or overdo it!

Some of these suggestions may prove to be helpful if you ever become a widow:

1. Keep occupied, but reserve time for the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.
2. Don't try to forget, but rather enjoy memories of the past.
3. Speak naturally about your departed spouse so friends will not be hesitant to speak.
4. Accept invitations, and open your home to others.
5. Be alert to the needs of others.
6. Maintain a constant companionship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Keep lines of communication open.
7. Develop a thankful, cheerful spirit in spite of circumstances, demonstrating the sufficiency of God's grace.
8. Form some close friends who can help with special needs.
9. Pray often, for others as well as for yourself.
10. Remember that the life of a widow can still be rewarding.

A Note from the Speaker . . .

Are the circumstances and trials in your life revealing your need to know God personally through His Son, Jesus Christ? Dear Friend, God wants to give you new life in Christ.

The Bible teaches us that God loves you. He wants you to know Him.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

What prevents us from knowing God personally? We are sinners, separated from God, so we cannot know Him or experience His great love without seeing ourselves first.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin; and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23).

And in as much as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally, be forgiven of our sins, and experience God's love, peace, and strength. He died in our place on Calvary.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the satisfaction for our sins (I John 4:9-10).

For when we were still without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).

After Christ's death, He rose from the dead. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Christ died for our sins . . . He was buried . . . He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . . (I Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, but through me (John 14:6).

It isn't enough to simply know about these things. We must make a personal decision to receive Jesus Christ as our Saviour and then we can know God and experience His love and strength. If you have not accepted Christ as your Saviour, I encourage you to do so today.

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe in the name of the Son of God (I John 5:11-13).