

# Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Preface .....                               | 7   |
| Chapter One                                 |     |
| GRACE AND THE FREE OFFER OF SALVATION ..... | 9   |
| Chapter Two                                 |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF WORSHIP .....             | 23  |
| Chapter Three                               |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF GIVING .....              | 37  |
| Chapter Four                                |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER.....               | 49  |
| Chapter Five                                |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF FASTING .....             | 65  |
| Chapter Six                                 |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF FORGIVENESS.....          | 79  |
| Chapter Seven                               |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF SELFLESSNESS.....         | 93  |
| Chapter Eight                               |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF FOOTWASHING .....         | 107 |
| Chapter Nine                                |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF SUFFERING.....            | 121 |

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter Ten                         |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF WAITING .....     | 139 |
| Chapter Eleven                      |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF MEDITATION .....  | 151 |
| Chapter Twelve                      |     |
| THE DISCIPLINE OF CONTENTMENT ..... | 165 |
| Chapter Thirteen                    |     |
| EFFECTIVE, FRUITFUL CHRISTIANS..... | 181 |

## CHAPTER ONE



# GRACE AND THE FREE OFFER OF SALVATION

### **INTRODUCTION**

Grace is one of the highest, most sacred themes in Scripture. Believers most often tend to think of grace as a dispensation, or a period of time in which God deals with humankind in a specific way. However, grace is so much more than just a specific era of time. Grace is a major aspect of the nature and character of the Almighty.

Suppose a person were to examine the Bible by dividing it into different periods of time according to the way God has dealt with humanity. An honest evaluation of these eras would cause that individual to recognize the vital role of God's grace and mercy within each of them. Were it not for His grace, the possibility of human redemption never would have registered on the scale of opportunity. Grace is the aspect of God's character that made possible the provision for human salvation, despite mankind's complete lack of merit. We did not deserve redemption, but

## SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

---

by God's grace He extended to us the invitation to experience salvation.

In this book we will consider the many aspects of growing in grace. However, before anything can grow, it first must be born. Before believers can grow in grace, they first must experience the initial gift of grace—salvation through Jesus Christ. To understand the need for redemption and the great opportunity God has given humanity to experience salvation, we have to look back to the beginning of human history—all the way to the Creation, Adam and Eve, and the Garden of Eden.

### **I. SALVATION IS A GIFT OF GOD**

Some situations in life are difficult for people to escape by their own efforts; some are impossible to get out of without assistance. Human sinfulness is one such condition individuals can escape only through the intervention of the Almighty.

#### **A. We Are by Nature Sinners**

The human experience began in the Garden of Eden. God first created the world and all that is therein. In six days He made everything and brought order to the universe. He examined His delightful creation and observed “it was good” (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). Still, however, God was not through with His creative work. As intricately beautiful and inspiring as His world was, God completed the six days with His crowning act of Creation when He made human beings in His own image and after His own likeness (Genesis 1:27). First, He made man—Adam—and then from Adam, God removed a rib and created a companion for him—the woman, Eve.

## GRACE AND THE FREE OFFER OF SALVATION

---

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. (Genesis 1:27)

God had something special in mind for this final work of creation. God had a beautiful world full of unique and inspiring creations, and He had a host of heavenly angels to worship Him around the clock and do all His bidding. But God desired a creation who, with intellect, creative imagination, and free will, would choose to love Him, serve Him, and live for Him. God was not interested in robotic responses of a creation void of choice, but He wanted individuals who, in spite of other opportunities, would choose to live with an eternal purpose—a purpose beyond this human plane, one focused upon and dedicated to the Creator.

The only way to have creatures of choice, however, was to set a choice before them. Consequently, God gave to Adam and Eve the gift of human will. God abundantly cared for their needs through the many trees and provisions of the Garden, but He forbade them to eat the fruit of just one tree: “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:17).

The serpent slyly approached Eve and convinced her God was withholding something good from her. When she partook of the forbidden fruit and gave it also to Adam to eat, everything changed within their utopian environment. Suddenly they encountered the judgment of God, the curse of sin, and banishment from the Garden. They came face to face with pain, struggle, hurts, and weariness they had not known previously. They fought with thorns and thistles to try to eek out an existence that beforehand had been provided by God. They experienced the pain and curse of sin. (See Genesis 3.)

## SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

---

As is always the case with sin, they did not suffer the curse alone. Sin always affects others besides the one who commits it. Adam and Eve introduced the pain and hardships of sin to the entire human race. Soon they experienced more of sin's evil face within their own family when Cain rose up and slew his brother, Abel (Genesis 4:1–8). So the pain went on and on and continued through the ages throughout every era and generation of humanity as individuals were born into a world of sin, and as each person inherited a fallen, human, sin nature.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . death reigned from Adam to Moses. . . . But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. . . . For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. . . . For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. (Romans 5:12–19)

Humanity's failure did not catch God by surprise. He knew the human race would fall to temptation and sinful disobedience. "Why, then," one might surmise, "did God take a chance on and create human beings in the first place?" In His foreknowledge God already had a plan in place to provide the missing component—the necessary assistance—so humans