



GRACE WORKS



WORKS DOES NOT WORK

TREVOR MADDISON

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By
Trevor Maddison

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Synopsis:

Grace could be the single most contested idea in the whole of the Bible, and in fact the whole of religion.

C.S.Lewis was a triple first at Oxford University and held professorships at both Oxford and Cambridge. He was an expert in anthropology – the study of man, so he knew as much as anyone about religion, both present and historical, and what he had to say about the message of GRACE is – It is the one idea that stands apart as different from all the others.

He saw all religion as fundamentally based on the same principle of LAW, but GRACE as the one idea that stood apart. ALL true Christians know something about it, because if they don't they are not really Christians. But the remarkable thing is, FEW even come close to the full truth of it, even though the scriptures are full of it.

There is a reason GRACE is so contested by both MAN and DEVIL. Every gift is a gift of grace, and it is our FORMIDABLE WEAPONRY. Without it we are reduced to mere sticks and stones, which I can assure you, our enemy is quite content with.

After nearly 48 years of living this Christian life, I finally got the release of the Spirit to write the book. Why now? Because we are now in the *end-times* and it will take all we've got to fulfil God's purpose in these times. May God equip us for this good work.

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PREFACE

This is now my 7th book.

I wanted to write this book many years ago – decades ago in fact, and I tried to once or twice, but I didn't really have the leading of the Spirit of God to do it. One thing this book needed was his grace, as always, so it had to wait for his instruction.

In my last book, the 6th, before I got this instruction or knew what it would be about, I said there I knew the next one would be special.

You will come to understand what I mean about grace as you read on.

The truth is, grace is and always has been a controversial topic, but as I explain in the book, that is because it doesn't fit worldly thinking, so it can't be understood from that position.

The Apostle Paul had a whole lot to say about grace, as did the other apostles. Yet, one small part of it gets the focus for many, which is that it can be turned into a license to sin, and they find they can't get beyond that.

There is a reason this topic is so embattled, even though it is there in the Bible in plain text. It is the only source of victory available to us, which is diametrically opposed to what those people think about it.

You may need to open your mind to get the full benefit of this, if you haven't already, and be ready to suspend premature judgement. Especially if before now you have heard a negative message about grace.

As I say somewhere towards the end, the reason I have been led to write this now is because we are in the *end-times*, so everything is accelerated, and it is needed.

Please understand, I'm not trying to sell you anything because all my Christian books are free online. That's just how God wanted it, so here it is. What I really want is to see a church that is powerful and dynamic, and I just know from experience, this is the only way that will happen. So, if it blesses you, please pass on the link as you are led.

If all this is new to you, so you're not yet a Christian, this book may be a little ahead of you, but I included an appendix, as I do in all my books, on how you can become a Christian and get started on your spiritual adventure.

Be blessed.

Trevor Maddison

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1. The Grace Dilemma

Why is the whole message of grace a dilemma for so many Christians?

Did you ever see one of those images that has two totally different ways of seeing it? It has two different embedded images, but when you first look at it your mind interprets it to be a particular thing, and you think you have completely recognised it for what it is. But then, as you stare at it more you get the sense there is more there to be seen, but you're just not seeing it.

Then, as you continue to stare, suddenly your mind seems to flip to reveal another image that was there all the time, but you just couldn't see it because you got so fixed on the first interpretation.

Now you have seen it, you can't unsee it, so you have the opposite problem. You even lost sight of the original image and can't now see what you originally saw.

Soon, as you continue to focus on the image, you find you are able to see both images now you know they are there, but not both at the same time. Your mind is able to flip back and forth from one image to the other at will, but you still can't see both at the same time.

Then, once you see it, you try to tell others about what you now see, and about how the image suddenly flipped in your mind. But they don't get it. They, like you, are fixed on

their first interpretation. You can describe to them what you now see, but at first they think you are crazy because their mind has a clear interpretation of the image and they can't understand why you can't see what they are looking at so plainly. All you can do to help is describe to them what you now see, and encourage them to keep staring, as you did, until their mind also flips and they finally share your experience and suddenly see what you see.

This is what the New Testament scriptures are like when it comes to the subject of law and grace.

Many who read the scriptures have a subconscious perception there is more there than they are now seeing, but their mind has not yet flipped, so they can't yet see it.

In fact, for some they decide to go to college to study it, again perceiving there is more there. But because they have concentrated on their first image interpretation so much that they embedded it deep in their mind, it now becomes even more difficult for them to see anything else, so your claim to see something else is frustrating for them, and they may even come to disbelieve it, or even resent it.

This is what it is like for the whole subject of *GRACE*.

This book is about me trying to help you by telling you what I now see. Yes, I see that old image that you are seeing, but I see more. That is what I want to try to help you with, but I can't make you see it. It has to come to you as a revelation of your own.

God made your mind to be a complex organ that can't be fully controlled. All you can do is work with it and ask God to help you use it to the full. But he promises, if you ask him humbly, that is exactly what he will help you do.

2. The Apostolic Revelation

The Apostles all had this experience of coming to understand God's grace. It's the thing that made them dynamic and powerful and led to the great success they had in taking their message of good news to the world.

You see, when you get this flipped image of grace, the flip is quite radical. It goes from an image that is essentially bad news (the law), to something that is good news (grace); that is so good, it is almost beyond credibility.

But for the apostles, they had a head start. That came from living with Jesus for three years where they came to understand, to some degree, how he was and how he worked. They recognised the great grace upon him, so they were good and ready to see and recognise the truth when it came to them.

They knew for sure it was something '*not of this world*'. Then at Pentecost, Christ himself came and filled them with himself – his Spirit, and they were finally primed ready to realise how great this message of the *Kingdom of God* is that they had been commissioned to carry to the world. And they were ready to write the book about it which we now call the *New Testament*.

Grace is *tremendous* news.

Actually the right word is *stupendous* because it is so great it can leave us stunned and feeling it is genuinely '*incredible*'.

But then, if you struggle with it let me ask – *Should you really have expected something less?*

Remember this, as you read in the scriptures, God sometimes conceals truth. It's his way of dealing with the pride and arrogance of humanity.

Coming back to the image that can flip and transform, it takes a clever artist to create something like that. Well, the word of God is something just like it, but a whole lot cleverer than any of us fully realise.

That puts you on notice that there is something more to see here, so before I get into it, let me appeal to you for humility, whoever you are, and encourage you to stop and pray that God will reveal the truth of this to you, and show you whatever you are missing.

3. Whose Way?

Jesus spoke of the narrow gate and narrow way that *MOST* don't find. And he warned of the broad gate and broad way that the majority find.

Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matt 7:13-14)

Then he spoke of himself as being *THE WAY*.

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

What is this *WAY*?

Didn't he mean he came to show us the way?

How can he BE the way – was that a typo?

Doesn't he just have an alternative philosophy on how to live, as other religious leaders have?

Why is this way so hard to find? And why do so many miss it?

Let's answer this last question first...

This way is hard to find because it doesn't fit worldly thinking, as most people in this world think.

In fact for those who think like the world thinks, this way that Jesus spoke of is sheer foolishness and stupidity.

Or, as most of them assume, they think it is a way for those that have their own agenda to get around what they know is really the right way. So they think this way is not the truth, but a perversion of truth and a license to sin.

But let's ask this – *What should we really expect?*

Should we really expect this way to be something that fits the world and worldly ideas, that the world is comfortable with? Or should we expect something really challenging and *NOT OF THIS WORLD*? If we are creatures of this world, raised to think like this world, why would it be surprising if the true way turns out to demand a whole other way of thinking; a higher way, that this world is not even aware of? Isn't this what we should expect from God?

What if most of Christianity, as we know it, turns out to be an attempt to fit that higher way into the mould of worldly thinking, but it doesn't fit?

As you move through this book you will come to realise that this is exactly what we are suggesting about the way of *GRACE*, rather than the way of *LAW*.

LAW is the worldly way.

GRACE is the higher way; the heavenly way.

If this is a problem to you, then before you judge this, please let me ask you to suspend that judgment for now and consider how this might be the truth as you read what follows, and then you can make a judgement.

Please also realise that the Bible says a whole lot about *grace* so if you are not making sense of it, you may well be thinking wrongly. After all, if this is the case, then what follows may be one of the most important things you will ever read.

4. Testimony

My post *born again* testimony in brief is: I spent about 7 years living a life under the principles of *LAW* which was difficult and disappointing, and then I discovered the truth of God's *GRACE*, which was something very different that changed me entirely.

Born again was real, I have no doubt of that. But my mind was still thinking and living according to the wisdom of this world.

Was I sinning? NO – or at least not particularly in any way I could see. That said, I was aware of failure and always repenting as I was trying to live a spiritual life, and yield good spiritual fruit, but I was trying to do it in a worldly way, from a worldly idea of how it is done, though I didn't realise that at the time.

To put it another way – I was trying to be a good person and fulfil all God's demands of goodness as I knew them. That included all that I knew that was '*Christian*'. But it wasn't working. Or it certainly didn't seem that way. Far from it. In fact it was a heavy load, which is not what I was expecting.

I am a thinking person, and maybe that was part of the problem. In time I became an engineer, scientist, mathematician, software developer, inventor, and author. So it wasn't a case of lack of intelligence or anything like that. In fact when I looked around I found there were many who were

none of those things that seemed to be doing much better than I was in their Christian life. I am someone who absorbs what I read, so the Bible was soon embedded in my mind, more than most Christians I meet, so it wasn't a lack of exposure to the word of God.

I knew the Bible well. I knew we are more than conquerors. I knew I was born again, saved, and justified by faith. I knew about the fruit of the Spirit this spiritual life should produce. I knew most of what Christians commonly know, but internally it wasn't producing the kind of life I expected, even though I was aware of developing spiritually. At the same time I was at least sure it was heading somewhere. I just didn't know where.

Of course, at my current stage of my life, in my mid sixties, through hindsight I now know where it was heading. I was heading towards an epiphany that would change everything when I discovered the principle of *GRACE*.

Please understand therefore, this is not a theoretical study. It is the product of solid experience. And now I am finally led by the Spirit to write about it after what has been a lifetime of learning. Why? Answer – To try to smooth the path for you that follow. That's why.

I'm not sure if this is your experience, but for me when God really wants me to learn something, and learn it well, he sometimes uses signs.

I was aware from the beginning that something was not quite right about the religion I was raised in, even if I was

also keenly aware there was something very right about it.

The very right thing was the draw of God to receive salvation that I felt in church even as a young boy. I did respond in those early years, but for me real surrender and salvation came the evening before my 18th birthday. That was a miracle and answer to a very specific prayer from years earlier, but I don't need to get into that here.

From there I got into 7 years of religious labour, as I call them, under the ideas of *LAW*. Then, partly through a swimming accident where I nearly drowned and found myself in hospital with a serious chest infection, I finally crashed and burned. My body was suffering, but my mind was suffering more. I felt a wretched failure as a Christian. Then right in the middle of that God showed his love for me. It took me quite some time to process that as I had simply lost sight of it, but from there everything, wherever I turned, began to speak to me of *GRACE*. Books, preachers, everything I read or heard spoke of God's *GRACE*. So I began to understand.

My background was Pentecostal, so I knew something of the gifts of the Spirit, including prophecy. That was one of the things that did seem to be leading me forward, so I was thankful to have that dimension to my spiritual life.

Then a time came when God began to speak to me directly about the *Keys of the Kingdom*, as Jesus spoke of them in scripture. I read it as if Jesus was speaking a prophetic word directly to me.

As is often the case with things like this, God also

then sent prophetic people to me that said the very same thing – *That God was giving me the keys to the Kingdom.* That was confirmation, but more was to come.

About that time I was working and training as an engineer for British Coal. They sent me to Scotland to visit a machine manufacturing company. There they had their own foundry where they cast their own metal components. After showing me the process they then said – we would like to give you a souvenir for your visit, and they gave me a large brass ornamental key that had just been cast and sawn off the ingot.

This was God now giving me a sign as further confirmation that the thing I was hearing was him, and it was very important.

What I came to understand about this key was – *It is the master key; the key to the key cupboard.* And the key principle it represents is this...

All things come by GRACE through FAITH.

Did you get that?

ALL THINGS come by grace through faith.

Not just salvation. Everything!

Understanding this took me some time, but to make the point God then gave me an instruction. He told to me to ask him every day for things I didn't deserve. What he wanted

was for me to break the cycle of living according to what I deserve and so specifically think of things that are good and ask him for them, regardless of whether I deserve them.

This was an epiphany that changed my whole life. It took me some time to really absorb it because it wasn't an idea I had been raised with. The effect of that was to change my whole concept of God completely. He became a different person for me. From there I have learned much more about him, but this was, AND STILL IS, foundational.

5. Discovering Grace

There are some things that science has discovered that are not fully understood. For example, this is true in some quantum theory. However, scientists know and can predict certain effects, so despite our limited understanding, these scientific observations have been put to practical use in modern day *technology*.

This was how it was for me when I first discovered grace.

Like the scientists, I believed it but I was to some degree scratching my head and wondering how it could work. Yet at the same time I had come into a great conviction about it, all affirmed within me strongly by the Spirit, complete with signs, but still I didn't fully understand how it works.

This was because my mind was still thinking in a worldly way, using worldly wisdom. To worldly thinking this seems not just counterintuitive, but downright dangerous as it seems to discard all the checks and balances that are normal in a worldly system.

For that reason, when you say 'grace' to many pastors, they have an instant negative reaction. For some it's like they immediately raise the cross against you and plead the blood of Jesus. For others they instantly look at you as if you must be a deviant with a secret life of sin.

But these pastors have a problem. Their problem is

the scriptures, because the scriptures speak extensively of grace. Some who have studied well know this, but because they don't understand it, they still have this kind of reaction. After all, the scriptures do also speak of grace used as 'license' to sin, and that is the 'go to' scripture for many of them. In fact sometimes they can remember nothing but that, because that is the only thing that makes sense to them. But when you study grace carefully in scripture you find the vast majority of it is extremely positive, and even foundational to the way of thinking of the apostles. So the hint is there, for those that care to see it, that we may be missing something extremely important if we don't believe in it.

Let me ask you this...

Do you expect something that has the capacity to transform the world from evil to good not to be challenged and attacked by the Devil?

Or are you smart enough to stop and think carefully when you see something that is literally attacked, that it may be because there is a key truth there that the Devil does not want you to discover?

Let's take a look at key scriptures that tell us this is exactly the case with grace...

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age (Titus 2:11-12)

Or how about...

For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. (Rom 6:14)

If this is what grace really does, can we afford to ignore it?

And why are these not the ‘*go to*’ scriptures, rather than the ones that speak of grace being abused as license?

As those who have studied the New Testament scriptures well will know, it says something very different about the *LAW*. What it says is the law stimulates sin (*Rom 7:5*), and that the law is a curse (*Galatians 3:10-14*). Which interestingly is the very thing many pastors and leaders seem to think about *GRACE*.

Then when you look at the *Pharisees*, *Sadducees*, and *Teachers of the Law* in the days of Jesus, he was exposing their inner corruption, which corroborates what this truth is saying of what the principle of law produces – it does not yield righteousness, but sin.

What is clear from this is – we really need to understand it. Otherwise we could make a big mistake, and here we are dealing with the eternal souls of the people we care for, so the stakes could not be higher.

Hopefully, by the time you finish this book, you will understand the truth of all this. Let’s pray for God to lead us into the truth of it.

6. Why Is There Evil?

When I evangelise, I often get a question from the people I meet who are not yet believers. Their question is – *If God is good why is there so much evil in the world he made?*

That's a good question. All Christians have some kind of answer to that. For some their answer boils down to – *I don't know, I just know he's a good God despite all that.* In some ways that's a good answer, and a true one for them, because it shows people are living from their Spirit, and not just their mind. However, it is often not good enough for the people out there. For that reason I try to give them a fuller answer, which for me is the right one because I have my beliefs about it that satisfy me, so I can't see why it shouldn't do the same for them.

My answer is – When God made man he did not just have a great idea, but a God-sized idea. That's a great idea even for a mind that knows everything, so it was *HUGE*. Take a look at how big the universe is. Well, his idea was that size or bigger.

The idea was to make independent beings with their own free will, so they were the same kind of being as God himself, just in miniature. Then he would get to relate to them as a free and sovereign being, as he is, and they could relate to him the same way.

But, there was a problem with this idea. An intrinsic problem. If God couldn't solve this problem then the chances are it would all go wrong, so the idea would have to be

cancelled. But have you ever had an idea of something you really, really want, but you don't know how to get it. If you are so keen on it, you pull out the stops, right? And you do everything you need to do in order to get it. Either that, or you cancel, but this one was so big for God he was ready to do whatever it takes to get it, and to pay whatever it cost.

The big problem I'm talking about was that man would use his free will to do evil and so mess up his creation. That has to be a possibility, right, or it would not be true free will? It wasn't so much that man would make bad choices, or make mistakes. That's just about learning, which is easy to correct. It's the problem that he would deliberately choose an evil path and corrupt what God had made.

If that was a possibility, then God had to have a plan in place to deal with it, or he could never go ahead and create such beings. What we now see in this world is exactly that plan unfolding.

The plan was this. Let it go wrong one time in a way that every creature God made would see it and realise exactly how bad the result of such a choice would be. Then, when they've seen it, he can release them with confidence into a better world, where they still have that free will, but everyone in it, and God, can be completely confident they will never make such an evil choice again.

That, my friend, in a nutshell, is the plan.

So, when people say – *Why are things so bad?* I say – it needs to be bad. As bad as it can be to make sure any creature

of God will never go near it again, ever.

That answer is not rocket science, and it seems to satisfy those that are genuinely asking that question, rather than just trying to win an argument. And personally, I don't see why it shouldn't be a good answer. It is what I believe.

Why do I mention that?

Well, the root problem for people that think this way is they are thinking from a worldly perspective, rather than from the perspective of God. They are asking why God doesn't just make life comfortable and trouble free for everyone. But actually God is taking the necessary steps to make sure his creation is happy and secure eternally.

The same is true for those that see obedience to the law as the simple solution to the problems in the world. As if they think if people were good and behaved well, there would be no problem, so all we need to do is to get them to obey the law. Most religions have this idea, but it is too simple. Not that God is not committed to making all things good, but that it can be achieved by simply pointing the way, as the law does. It assumes that man has the capacity to obey it if he chooses.

However, the real problem is that God's creation cannot function as he intended if each and every free-willed creature within it does not have God in his proper place. God is the source of all goodness. He is also the way by which all his creatures are connected, and so in right relationship with him and each other. Therefore without him there is a disconnect that makes his creatures not just independent of

him, but also of each other, which introduces the concept of selfishness into his creation. But that is corruption, and not how he made it to be.

God's plan to reform man is therefore to lead him back into that place of total dependence on God, but without revoking that free will that is vital to God's purpose in making man in the first place.

Law is given only to let man make an attempt to be good by his own means, so he can prove to himself beyond question that this not possible. After all, how could man achieving goodness independently of God cause him to return to the place of dependence. Law, as a principle, is therefore doomed to fail, and only serves to remove that belief that any free-willed creature can live in goodness independently of God. Therefore faith becomes the key issue. This is what Satan lacked when he fell. For him, living independently of God was a credible idea, so God is using his attempt to do it to develop that faith that all of his creatures need to protect them from ever using their free will in that way again.

Grace, on the other hand, is the very opposite of Law in that respect. It is a principle whereby man can achieve goodness, but it is essentially a principle that is wholly dependent on God rather than himself, so it serves to return man to his proper place, each with God in his proper place in relation to them, and each to their proper place in relation to each other.

It is therefore not rocket science to understand why

– *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5b).*
And it is easy to understand the purpose of *LAW* as a flawed principle that must be tried first, before we discover the principle of *GRACE* that really works.

7. What Is Law?

When we speak of law, we are not really speaking of one specific set of laws, but we are speaking of a principle. A principle is something that underpins a system and makes it work. As such, with *LAW*, it may have many forms and out-workings, but the principle underneath is the same.

From there we can recognise one such outworking of law, and that is the Mosaic law that the people of Israel were given. But that is not the only one. In his letter to the Romans, Paul recognises that the Gentiles also have law, which he calls the *law of the mind*. This is what we also call conscience. It passes judgement on all that we do, evaluating everything by its value for goodness. Of course, Israel also had that, but they were given a written law in addition to really elucidate it, and corroborate it, which was intended to leave no doubt about what God's law demands.

One thing to say about Mosaic law is – *IT IS STRICT!* In fact Islam got many of its ideas from Mosaic law; a fact that many Jews or even Christians today would not care to admit.

But it was strict for a reason. That reason is when it failed to produce true righteousness, no-one could then turn around and say, it failed because it was not strict enough. It is actually so strict, no-one could really imagine how it could be stricter.

For example, if a youth ever rebelled against their parents, they had to be put to death!

Then, one was compelled to love God with every fibre, and to do the same for one's neighbour. And never to deviate from that if you want to keep the law.

This was not a law that was ever expected to be kept; not by the fallen and sinful beings we are. What it was designed to do was to show we are simply not the kind of beings that would, or could ever keep such a law. And that was the point.

Then along comes Jesus, who didn't throw out the standard of the law as some think, but he *RAISED IT!* Now a person who wants to avoid sin is not just commanded not to murder, but he is told if he is even angry with another, it is equivalent to murder, and he is violating the law. And now he is not just told not to commit adultery, but he is told he is committing adultery if he even looks at a woman and lusts after her.

For any that were within earshot of his teaching, what that should have done for them is kick the ball out of the ballpark. They had no chance of keeping it. In truth they had no chance anyway, given the demand for total love, but there were still some under an illusion about that, so he made sure they knew where they stood.

Every person has failed to keep the law. Jesus is the only exception.

Try telling a religious Jew about this Christian expansion of the law. Most of them don't know about it because they don't read the New Testament. It will make for an interesting conversation.

What the Law is actually seeking to do is to show us we are broken creatures. It was never intended to change that fact, but just to fully reveal it.

I am British. Our history goes back a long way. Before we started down the track of penal institutions, many of the laws of the land would carry the death penalty. Theft, poaching, violence, and many other things could mean you would be executed. This was even where there was extreme poverty, where people were tempted to steal or poach just to survive.

Usually what happened was, when the offending person was dragged before the judge, for a large percentage of the time the sentence would be cancelled or commuted. But there was always a stream of repeat offenders that were executed to keep everyone on their toes, knowing it could happen to them. If you committed even a petty crime, and the judge didn't like your face, you could find yourself as one of them. He had that power. If you wanted to avoid death row, then you had to obey the law.

Of course, it was brutal, but it kept law and order in the land. Long term incarceration was simply too costly, so this alternative worked well, and on the whole served its purpose.

Some speak of historical slavery as a brutal thing, but actually slavery was an alternative to this, and probably, for the most part, a more humane one on the whole. Of course, slavery expanded to taking free people captive by force, and that is something else that is more sinister. But as a means of punishment for debt or crimes, it sometimes worked quite

effectively.

For all this, what we need to understand is that law is a worldly principle. It may contain a good standard; even a heavenly one, but it is made for the world and for law-breakers (*1 Tim 1:9*). Heaven doesn't need such law, and God himself doesn't work to it. In heaven they just live naturally because they are not fallen creatures as we are; they are holy.

The Apostle Paul therefore calls *Law – the elementary or basic principles of the world*. Some think when they read this, he is speaking in some way of sin, but in actual fact he is speaking of the principle of Law.

It is shocking for some to say it, but it is true: Many churches run on this same principle of law, so they are *WORLDLY*.

Of course, many churches don't understand this so they think a worldly church is a sinful church – a church where people sin. But the truth is, a worldly church is a *legalistic* church who believe in a principle of law and in one way or another they implement it.

Yes, the fact that sin is present in a church may also make us realise it is worldly, but that sin may even be coming from the fact that law is their basic principle. What that means is, they are not simply deviating into lawlessness, which does happen, but they are running on the weak and miserable principle of Law that can't properly solve the problem of sin; it just at best suppresses it (*Gal 4:9*).

The truth is, the church is not supposed to run on the principle of Law. Law is appropriate to most worldly institutions, but that is not true for the church.

For the world, if they don't implement law, they become corrupt. But for the church, if law is their principle, they have become corrupt because they are supposed to run on a different principle; a heavenly one. Think about that!

8. Examples of Law in Church

One thing that tele-evangelism did for us is – it put the Law on the global stage.

Some have seen that as a bad thing, as the failures it produced went public and it gave the church a bad reputation. But in fact it served God's purpose on a whole bigger scale. It showed the shortcomings of the principle of Law and legalism, which is the whole purpose of the law – to reveal sin.

In the same way that it failed for the Jews, as Jesus revealed and exposed more than anyone else. So it failed for the tele-evangelists, and that should have taught us all a good lesson.

Of course, not all tele-evangelism was legalistic, but a whole lot of it was, and is. A fact I don't think too many will disagree with.

For some that fell in this way, they then staged their repentance and made their way back to the limelight; at least for some followers. But did they then come to understand what caused their fall?

I can assure you, many didn't.

The truth is, the harder they push on the principle of law, the more inevitable that fall is. They think it is a fall from grace, but actually when you look at the scriptures, falling from

grace is not falling into sin. That's a misinterpretation of scripture. Falling from grace is falling from grace into law (*Gal 5:4*). We will say more on this later.

As they never really had grace, because they were always running on the law, it is not actually a fall from grace, but a fall from law into sin, which is exactly what the scriptures tell us we should expect (*Rom 7:5*).

One day, in heaven, we may thank these ones for putting their fall on the stage, because it gave us the chance to learn something second-hand, instead of falling ourselves.

However, for many that get sucked into their teaching, it will lead them to fall too, so I'm not sure they will be thanking these false teachers for that. One day we will see.

At this point there will be some of you that are a little confused. You will be asking – *What then are these principles of grace?* For some, you think you understand but you don't, so you need to keep an open mind as you continue. If you have followed what you have read here so far then keep going. I am getting to the part that may help you understand.

Before we move on, let's first take a look at a scripture that is high on the list of those that are most misunderstood.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
(Rom 12:2)

So the Apostle Paul is here speaking about a '*renewed mind*' and about the '*pattern*' of this world. Actually, there is no Greek word here for '*pattern*' so what Paul is literally saying is – *Do not be conformed to this world*. In the letters to the *Galatians* and *Colossians*, there is a Greek word which is generally translated – *elemental things* or *basic things of the world*, but all of these scriptures are actually pointing to the same thing – the principle of *LAW*.

The whole of Paul's letter to the *Galatians* is focused on the subject of *Law* and *Grace*, and it is also a major theme of the letter to the *Romans*. In the verse above there is no reason to think Paul has moved away from that theme. He is not just speaking of conforming to the sinful ways of the world, but to the principles of *Law* on which the world runs. Therefore what he is really speaking of when he talks about a renewed mind, is a mind that has been changed to a different principle; a principle of heaven, which is the principle of *GRACE*.

Only a mind that really understands grace is a renewed mind.

Even in the very next verse Paul comes back to *grace*, telling them it is a reason to stay humble. In the verse before it he spoke of a '*living sacrifice*' which again some see as speaking of ceasing to sin, or they see it as meaning working hard for the Kingdom, but it is not primarily about either sin

or works – not directly. We will come back to this later in this book as it has more meaning than that.

That got us back to the Bible, which I am sure many of you will be more happy with, but this chapter is really about examples of Law in the Church, about which I will say a few more things.

The way we do church, and the principles on which we base it, affect everything in it: the structure; the teaching; the practices. All of it. For some churches across the world it almost completely and unashamedly drags them back to the *Old Testament* way. That was the day when they did function on Law, and it was right for that time. But as the letter to the *Hebrews* makes clear, the church of Jesus functions on a whole new covenant, so the old is superseded by the new.

Law is, and always was, powerless. Jesus is building his church as he said. Anything that is not based on his principles are a sham and a masquerade; The old dressed up as the new. If we want the rewards of the new, we have to function on the principles of the new. Anything else only leads to the rewards of the old, and that is not a good thing, I assure you.

In *Deuteronomy 28*, Moses reiterates the law of Moses to the people. In it he gives them 14 verses of promises of blessing if they keep the law. Then he gives a whole 54 verses of curses if they don't keep the law. Not small things; Big things; The things that define the whole of life – Provision; Possession; Domination; Status; Blessing. Then he goes on to *Deuteronomy 31* where he prophetically and categorically says, they won't keep the law. So there he is guaranteeing it will be

a curse for them, which it was.

Ok, after much pain from deviating from keeping the law, they sometimes came back to it, and got the benefit of it for a time, but what was proved is there is something in human nature that deviates from it as soon as it feels it has the opportunity and can get away with it.

The reality is, the law never really changed anyone. All it did was just show them they need to change.

How common is it for churches to be legalistic?

It is a very common thing. That doesn't mean those churches are of no use to God because learning about the failure of Law is a necessary part of the learning curve for many, as it was for me. Every person has a unique path so these lessons are all individually learned, at various stages of life, through circumstances unique to each one. But fortunately God is in charge of that learning process.

I remember once hearing a story in a sermon of a pastor that happened to visit the local doctor's surgery first thing on Monday morning, the day after church, only to find half his congregation were there waiting for treatment. Many of them were seeking medication for depression or other such maladies.

His response was shock and horror, followed by a solemn declaration of intention that things were going to change in his church.

When I heard this, whilst I applaud the sentiment, at the same time I wonder what he meant. My concern is that he was intending to double down on his legalism and beat the sheep over this matter so they no longer sought such help.

The problem is that legalism can be a very heavy load (*Matt 23:4*), so where leaders and mentors don't understand this they really don't have a solution. Of course the real solution is a whole new mind-set based on the principle of grace, but to get to that the normal path is to admit the failure of law in all humility, and then the way is open to discover the truth of God's grace.

9. Where Is The Power?

The greatest difference between the principles of Law and of Grace, is that Grace does in fact contain the power, whereas Law does not.

They are both devoted to the same goal, which is to bring every person into a holy life. But only one contains the necessary power to accomplish it.

When we speak of *'power'*, let's understand what that means. We really should be more in touch with what power is today than they ever were back in the days of the early church. Today we have forms of energy that they never had, and we know how to use it. When we want power, we make the right connection, and then we throw the switch.

Power, by definition in this context, means something else is providing the energy, not us. So I repeat, once we have the power, all we need to know is how to make the right connection, and then how to throw the switch.

If you missed that then you need to re-read it. *Once we have the power, all we need to know is how to make the right connection, and then how to throw the switch.*

Of course, the first question there is how do we get the power, or how do we know that we have it?

Every true Christian has already taken a step down that road. They believed in Jesus. But what did they believe? Did they

believe if they were good enough, Jesus would save them. Even the Law promised that, and Jesus even affirmed it (*Luke 10:25-28*). The problem is, if they really believed they are good enough, they are not believing in Jesus at all. What they are really believing in is themselves.

I realise I am preaching to the converted here, but I need to make this point. What they are really believing in when they believe in Jesus, is they are believing in his *GRACE*. His grace to forgive them and save them apart from anything they deserve. If they don't believe that then what they did was questionable, because this is what we call '*saving grace*'.

Ok, this step is well understood, and many have been *born again* through it. That said, it is not universal. For some churches what they want is for people to put their faith in them, the church, even if they don't say it directly. By that they get a hold over those people for their own purpose. But that is not faith in God's grace, so it can't save them. That just makes them a member of a worldly institution, that's all.

If this first step into believing in grace is taken, grace then becomes the available power source. We begin by grace through faith (*Eph 2:8-9*), and every step thereafter should be the same. We live by faith from first to last (*Rom 1:17*) – but faith in what? Same answer. We live by grace through faith from first to last. That is what this is saying. As we started, so we proceed. We need to come to believe in his grace for all things because nothing of value comes to us any other way.

At this point I must refer you back to the physical key God gave me and its meaning, because that is what I am speaking

of here – *By grace through faith, all things.*

It is not uncommon to be saved by grace and then try to proceed in your own strength. To try to perform. But that is not the way God made it. In fact that puts you back on the grounds of Law for all that follows, which always fails, ironically, even though you are at the same time believing in his grace for salvation.

In the parable of the sower Jesus did speak about receiving the word, but then losing it in some way. When Paul was writing to the Galatians, the way he said it was – *I am still travailing over you until Christ is fully formed in you (Gal 4:19)*. They had not yet fully decided to place their faith in his grace, but were tempted to fall back into law. They were still in the birthing process.

A similar battle takes place over what follows new birth. We have to decide whether we are going to proceed by faith in his grace, or whether to proceed in our own strength based on the principle of Law. And we can't do both.

It is only grace that has the power, so this is what decides if we are connected to that power. We need to have our faith placed wholly in God's grace for every step we take in this Christian life. If we have that we are almost ready. But what we now need to know is how to make the connection and then throw the switch.

10. Making A Connection

When I speak of making a connection, I'm speaking of where you apply your faith. Faith is always based on some knowledge, so it has a focus. But it is not simply knowledge, it is something you believe.

When applied to salvation, that is where your faith is focused. The same goes for everything that follows.

Once saved you have to decide where next to apply your faith. For most people that is a natural choice, and a natural consequence of being *born again*... They want to live a righteous life and please God.

Later, of course, you will want to apply your faith to many other important things. Like where do I live, and what do I eat. All those are connections we can make when we need to, because after all Jesus promised us many things, some of which are necessary for life, so we need him to come through on those promises.

Beyond the things we need, it is then the things that we want, and Jesus even spoke about those things too, so we can look into that. However, for most of us, the need to be living a righteous life is a critically important one, so that is where we will focus our discussion next.

11. Living A Righteous Life

Living a righteous life is normally the first and primary concern of every Christian. But they may not find that is quite as easy as they thought for all the reasons already discussed.

When people get truly *born again* and saved, they come in with all sorts of weights and entanglements. Those tend to be a big concern because the first thing they want is to validate their salvation by living a changed life. If they are conscious of slipping and failing, the enemy will be quickly on to it to try to snatch away their faith, and they feel it. So for that reason they want to experience success in their new standard of living as a Christian believer.

For that reason, the first and primary connection of their faith they want to make is to seek to live in a way that proves what they have is real, first to themselves, and then to others.

If it walks like a duck, and it quacks like a duck, then it probably is a duck. Equally, if they behave like a Christian, and talk like a Christian, they can believe they are a Christian. They feel it will give them the assurance they need to sustain them in their faith.

When it comes to living a righteous life, it is not just you that wants to achieve that; your pastors want you to achieve it too. Believe me.

You see, whether or not you achieve that defines

whether they are successful or not in their work, and often whether or not they can continue to have the job of pastoring you, and keep receiving the living that goes with it in many cases.

But it's not always vested interest. As a church we are a true body, and all members naturally want to care for all others, so they normally want you to succeed for that reason alone.

If you are not succeeding it will be of real concern to them. First because they care for you. And second because your success validates their work, so if you don't succeed it forces them to ask why, and whether their teaching and care of you is in fact everything it should be.

12. Why Does Law Fail?

So, if Law fails, why does it fail? And if it fails, why was it given?

This brings us to the root of man's problem, that he became independent of God. The Devil tempted man saying – *You can become as God by eating the forbidden fruit*. So man took the bait and tried to 'go it alone'. Then the next thing you see is man hiding from God.

That step became the fall of man into evil, and it defines his problem ever since. Man tries to live independently of God from his fallen evil state.

What that also tells us is the way that man can be reformed and restored. He must once again come back to dependence on God, so God becomes his source, as it was originally designed to be.

Jesus said '*I am the WAY the TRUTH and the LIFE*'. Without God there is no life, only death. Without God man finds himself not in truth, but living a lie. And without God man is a lost being, having lost his way and become alienated from his only source.

LAW is a worldly principle because it offers a way whereby man can be righteous and live independently of God, if he can keep it.

LAW does not contain any power to live it. It depends entirely

on man's own power.

LAW only offers proof that man is broken and evil, incapable of keeping it. He simply does not have the capacity to love as the law demands; as an unfallen being would.

That leaves him with two options. One is to admit it, and the other to cover it up and claim to be keeping it. However, the cover up becomes hypocrisy if he pretends to be righteous by the law, which then leads to blindness and all kinds of other evil, such as pride, bigotry, elitism, and selfishness. All of which make the love of one's neighbour even more impossible.

What is clear from the gospels is it was a major purpose of Jesus to expose and uncover such hypocrisy.

This is particularly true in the gospel of Matthew, the Apostle, who seems to major on that aspect of the ministry of Jesus. That was probably because this was Jesus exposing and denouncing the very people that condemned him as a tax collector and sinner. I am sure it was a great comfort for him to see and hear all this from Jesus as it showed he was not the only one with a problem, and according to Jesus his detractors were in an even worse state than he was by their hypocrisy.

While Jesus was direct with these murderous religious police who saw themselves as the standard of righteousness. He was much more respectful of those that came genuinely seeking truth.

Instead he would try to lead them to make their own conclusions. After all, what is needed for man to get God's help is first to admit his own condition. That meant he couldn't simply be told of his failure, but must be led to realise it for himself.

What Jesus said of – *a seed must fall to the ground and die if it is to live (John 12:24)*, is at least partially fulfilled by each man coming to the place where he first condemns himself as someone who has fallen short of the mark. Only then will he look for new life.

The LAW is given as an aid to help him do this, so it is a ministry of death, as the scriptures say it is (*2 Cor 3:7*).

13. Moses And The Law

The Old Testament scriptures give us a perfect illustration of how it is with the law.

When Moses led the Israelite slaves out of Egypt, he took them to Mount Sinai in the desert. Then he ascended the mountain to meet God.

While he was up there, God gave him two tablets with the ten commandments carved on them by the finger of God (*Ex 31:18*). He was up the mountain for 40 days, and during that time the Israelites grew restless and decided to express their newfound freedom.

Before now, in Egypt, their slave masters had kept them working, with little spare time of their own. They knew the stories of their ancestry, of the God of their fathers, and they had now seen him work in miraculous ways with the plagues and the Red Sea. But here they found themselves with a level of freedom they had never had before, and it led them to sin by creating a false God in the golden calf, and by starting an orgy, believing Moses to have perished on the mountain somehow.

At that point God told Moses what was happening and sent him back down the mountain with the tablets. As Moses came back to the people where all this was going on, he became angry and threw the tablets down on the ground, where they were broken (*Ex 32:19*). He then punished them by grinding the golden calf to dust and made them drink it in

their water. He also made them carve out two more stone tablets to replace the ones that were broken (*Ex 34:1*).

This is a picture of how it is with the law. It is broken as soon as it is received. And then we are forced to carve it out and keep it for ourselves, using our own skill and energy, rather than by God that first created it.

We also find that under the principle of law, man cannot be free. It is designed to suppress his evil nature, but it doesn't solve it. Freedom under the law will only mean freedom to sin, so it must be restrained.

This is a picture of how incapable man is of keeping God's law, and how difficult a life is under it.

The reality is, even after carving the new tablets, they too are immediately broken, so the law is only a curse and a perpetual grindstone for man, as the Apostle Paul pointed out in his letters (*Gal 3:10*).

14. How Does Grace Succeed?

How does *GRACE* succeed where *LAW* fails?

The hallmark of *GRACE* as God's solution to man's problem is that it brings him wholly back to dependence on God, which is the thing he lost when he fell.

Keep that in mind, as it is very important.

Whereas *LAW* is designed to prove to man his corrupt state of evil. *GRACE* is designed to bring man back into the place he was in before he fell, which is wholly dependent on God.

GRACE therefore contains its own power, which is the power of God.

Whereas *LAW* is powerless in order to expose man's evil condition. *GRACE* accesses God's power bringing him back to the place he was in before he fell.

What the scriptures tell us is – *God has bound all men over to disobedience, so he may have mercy on them all (Rom 11:32)*. It is therefore a necessary step for man to try himself and fail, before he can receive God's answer, provided he is honest and does not then turn to hypocrisy.

So how is *GRACE* actually applied to our lives?

To answer this let's take a look at what, in my view, is probably

the most misunderstood verse in the Bible. Or certainly the one that has the greatest consequence.

Then he [Jesus] said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. (Luke 9:23)

I would suggest there has been a huge battle over this verse as there are two very different understandings of it – one is the understanding of *LAW*, and the other the understanding of *GRACE*.

This misunderstanding hinges around the English word ‘*DENY*’ which has been the focus of the battle. English, of course, is the most widespread language in the world, and the language used mostly in the global spread of the scriptures.

The word *DENY* has two meanings in English. One is akin to ‘*DEPRIVE*’ where we deny ourselves some kind of indulgence. As such it carries with it an ascetic religious observance idea, where we beat our body and make it a slave to us; or where we live a life of austerity and abstinence, as perhaps monks and nuns would typically do in a monastic lifestyle – probably as a result of this verse as much as anything; or where we simply abstain from all sin.

However, the word *DENY* has another meaning in English, which is the original Greek meaning. It means to say or declare something is false. If I am asked if I am the person who stole the last cookie, I can deny it – meaning to affirm this is a false identity – I am not the person (despite liking

cookies). To ‘deny’ in this sense is simply to refuse to accept something is true, and declare it false, so it is about affirming truth.

Which of these two meanings do you think the original Greek word in this verse is?

The true and original meaning of *DENY* in this verse is to *DECLARE FALSE*. And in this case it is not just to deny a falsehood, but denying a whole identity – hence ‘*deny yourself*’.

Jesus is NOT therefore saying here we must deprive ourselves. Even though it is good to be temperate and to at times deprive ourselves of things we may enjoy – **this is not what this verse is saying.**

This denial of a false identity is the vital first step that enables us to walk in the Spirit, which is our true identity as a person who has been *born again* and become a *new creature*. The next step is equally important, which is to confess our true identity, but we will come to that.

Q: Why is denial and confession of identity so important?

Q: Does such a denial or confession in some way affect the truth?

The answer is, under the New Covenant – *The righteous will live by faith* (*Hab 2:4, Rom 1:17*). This is the switch that releases the power. In everything God does with us, he requires us to be involved, but not working in our own strength. When we got

born again, he gave us the right to become a child of God, but it was we who exercised that right. We chose it. God didn't just unilaterally transform us to a new creature. We made a decision, and that is always an important thing to God.

One thing that has already been stated is – *as it begins, so it continues* (Rom 1:17). For God to keep working in us it requires us to be willing and available, so God needs us to do our part. That part is not work, as a legalist would think, but it is like throwing a switch that allows the power to flow.

The fact that power is available means it does not require work, but it does require our will as we are the one God has put in charge of our own life, and he is not even close to revoking that responsibility.

After all, what is confession, and what is denial? It is nothing – of no consequence, except that God requires it to release his power. It is something so simple we can't claim it is work, but simply agreement and consent for God to move in a way that affects us.

When we first came to Christ and were *born again*, it was not through any work of our own. We simply believed and then God did the work. Even the believing was not something we did ourselves, but it was God that made it possible by drawing us to himself. We just accepted, and received.

If your gospel of salvation is more complicated than this, then take a look at the thief on the cross.

If this is too simple for you then that shows you still have some belief you can make it on merit, so that puts you back on the grounds of the law, not grace. Receiving by grace is a step into total dependence on God, which is all God wants from you, so there is no room in it for boasting, as if you somehow achieved it by your own power.

Through grace you become God's workmanship, not your own, and every step that you take after this first one should come in a similar way. So, to now live a holy life is again not something you should believe you can now achieve apart from God. You achieve it only by releasing the power of grace in your life by making the connection to the power of your faith, and then throwing the switch, which again will be by some kind of confession, which can't be classified as work.

Like your step into salvation, this may seem too simple. But that is exactly how it is supposed to be if it is to be wholly dependent on God and his power.

This brings us back to the key verse we are looking at (*Luke 9:23*). To '*deny yourself*' is to confess and affirm you are not the old creature that you were before you were *born again*.

To '*take up your cross*' is again by confession. You affirm that your old self went to the cross and was crucified there in Christ.

Then '*follow me*' is to affirm you are a new creature, with a new life, and by that confession you begin to walk in and be led by (follow) the Spirit.

You see, in all of this you are not working, but you are living by faith, as the prophet Habakkuk prophesied you would (*Hab 2:4*). You connect your faith to a truth, and then you confess it, thereby throwing the switch so the power can flow. In this way you connect to God's power of grace, and you act in a way that is wholly dependent on him, as he wants.

Such an idea is foreign to this world, and foreign to the principle of Law that only rewards you according to what you deserve. Under the law the only power source is broken old you, which means you are incapable of living and succeeding that way. But under grace the power is from God, and is given as undeserved favour. Not by in any way earning it.

Of course, when we plug into the electrical power socket at home, someone has to pay the bill for the energy. The same is true for the power of grace, but God has already paid for all that – for an unlimited supply, through the cross of Christ.

Over my years as a believer I have seen many cases of leaders wanting to make both salvation and the Christian life more difficult than it is as it clearly seemed too simple to them.

At times I have heard them speak against what we have called – *the prayer of salvation*. They at least want baptism even though the thief on the cross still made it to heaven without it.

Don't misunderstand me, water baptism is a powerful thing for moving us forward spiritually and consolidating what

we have. It is actually a physical, rather than verbal, enactment of the confession of our death and resurrection that is key to our new life, so it helps immensely. We can always look back on it and remind ourselves we did it. But in the final analysis, salvation comes if we simply – *CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD* and are saved (*Joel 2:32, Acts 2:17*).

In earlier days, when I began evangelising, I tried to persuade people to be a Christian, which is often necessary, but then God said to me – *just show them how to do it* – because for many this is actually all they need; they just don't know how. Yes it has to be sincere, and we emphasise that to them, but the harvest field is actually ready, as Jesus said, and this is all many of them need to get started.

For those that want to complicate this, that is evidence of their legalism – their belief and trust in the Law, so they don't really have good news at all.

What we need to understand is that to call on the name of the Lord *IS A LEGAL TRANSACTION*. It is like signing a document, which is simple, but how many of us know how impactful that can be? In some ways it is like signing over the '*power of attorney*' for our lives, because through it another comes to live his life in us. Though for us there is not just this one time transaction, but also a daily need of confession of faith in our new identity to make it work for us each day. By it we die daily.

I remember a very prominent and respected Baptist preacher telling us he had a biker guy asking him if he could be baptised. But for this leader to be satisfied he was ready for

baptism, he first sent him off to *'produce some fruit of repentance'* and then come back and tell him about it. Then if he was satisfied he agreed to baptise him. This biker guy went away and came back a while later and told him he had stopped biting his fingernails, upon which the minister baptised him.

Here we have what Paul described as a false gospel; one that is not wholly dependent on grace. By it he is putting the cart before the horse. The confession is the thing that is designed to save us and make it even possible for us to change, so to demand change first is legalism, and a false gospel.

Repentance is only a commitment to change, but it is only grace that can actually achieve it, especially when devils are working against it. The Greek word is *metnoia* which literally means *'change of mind'* and this is intrinsic to spiritual rebirth, which is why it is sometimes stated in scripture, as a requirement for salvation, and sometimes not. From there on a Christian cannot sit comfortable with sin, so their mind is compelled to be directed towards pleasing God, and is never happy to be going in any other direction.

Of course, on making that confession, grace is often given to make some immediate changes, but make no mistake, it is grace. However, if salvation is thought to be dependent on that change, it will be easily snatched away. We need to make them realise, and constantly remind them, their salvation is more robust than that. Then, as they continue to stand and believe, they will see real and actual change take place.

As for this Baptist minister, who had a sharp mind, and was quite influential on me as a young Christian. He was selected

to take part in a debate for Christianity against Islam. As he researched and prepared, he suddenly found himself unable to differentiate. The reason is because his views were really legalistic, and not based on grace. Islam is a religion of law, so naturally it can appeal to the legalistic and worldly mind, even though it is quite extreme. This seemed to perplex him.

Though he continued as a Baptist minister, I then later heard him preach a sermon about *'believers in hell'* which again told me he was tracking further down the same road. My guess is that he had proved his legalism doesn't really change people, so not knowing what to do, he was now tracking towards even stricter legalism as the solution, and this was part of it.

The reality is law fails, and Islam has provided a perfect example of that, even causing people to invent their own version of morality that can include violence, domination, elitism, and so many other ugly things; even developing their own view of God in Allah, that fits those ideas, which is in fact total corruption.

The truth is, over the centuries, some brands of Christianity have done the same, and for the same reasons. Legalism is a principle of this evil world and it doesn't yield good results.

For ourselves, we can bypass all of that failure of religion by realising the true gospel is one of grace through faith, from first to last. And that is genuinely good news as it really works.

15. Walking By The Spirit

So what we have now discussed is how to initiate a walk in the Spirit through applying our faith and then releasing the power of God by making the necessary confession.

We are doing this for one reason. So we can practically live the holy life that the scriptures show us God wants.

But is such a life possible?

Many Christian believers suggest it is not, and that we will always fail. But are they the believers we already discussed that are trying to achieve it on the principles of Law? Of course we expect them to fail. But what should we reasonably expect from a person that discovers this power of grace that is wholly dependent on God, and not ourselves?

Before we discuss this, one question to ask is – *If this grace does succeed, who should get the credit?* Would it really be reasonable for us to take the credit if we know full well that the power came wholly from God?

This is where we begin to see we are on the right footing. As it was for salvation, we must realise there is no room in it for boasting, only for giving glory to God, which we immediately recognise from the scriptures is how it should be. Under grace there is no need for false humility, as there would be under the law, but we can be entirely genuine in wholly crediting God for any victory we experience.

So can we really expect victory?

If not then there is much in the scriptures that makes little sense. Not least that we are *more than conquerors* in Christ. If failure is the norm, and this is how it is supposed to be, as some suggest, how can we possibly understand such a scripture? What this is telling us is just that the true principle of living such a life has not yet been discovered, and what that almost invariably means is the principle of law is still in charge somehow, even if those under it do not fully realise it.

That brings us to some emphatic statements in scripture where the Apostle Paul states them in both the positive and negative, to make sure we don't miss the truth.

One is about our initial rebirth...

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Cor 5:17)

Another is about our walk in the Spirit...

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (Gal 5:16-18)

What this scripture makes clear is to solve the problem of living a holy life, as the scriptures tell us, the way to do it is to

walk in the Spirit, and not in the flesh. It therefore follows that the main thing any believer need to learn is how to get into the place where they are walking by the Spirit, and then to know how to stay there.

Should this really be complicated? Or should we expect this to be incredibly simple, as it was for salvation?

Almost invariably the idea of doing anything spiritual tends to be corrupted by legalistic ideas that usually boil down to – Try harder!

But what I have been trying to show is that in every case we should not expect it to be by work, but by faith. Therefore it is not labouring in our own strength that is required, but to make a connection of faith and then switch on the power through confession, as we have been discussing.

To reiterate that – We deny our old identity as the old creature. We reckon the old nature to be crucified on the cross in Christ, so we take up our cross. We then confess ourselves to be the new creature, who by nature lives the life of Christ, and we then stay in step with the Spirit and follow him, according to *Luke 9:23*.

This is the key.

The important thing to then understand is that the walk of the Spirit should be a natural walk, so it doesn't require us to work and labour. It is natural.

Someone once said, the walk of the Spirit is only seen in hindsight, when we look back on each day once we lived it.

And that then brings us to another question, which is how often should we make our confession – denying ourselves, taking up our cross, and following him?

The answer is in the same verse – We do it daily (*Luke 9:23*).

When we are *born again* we make a once only lifetime confession of faith that brings us new birth. But from there, to walk out the life of the Spirit, we make a daily confession of our true identity in Christ, and then we just live completely naturally.

Of course, when we are into such a walk and life of the Spirit, the enemy will come along and try to make us trip and stumble to get us out of this position of faith, as that is his only way to defeat us. So from there we need to know how to sustain our walk in the Spirit when we find we are under attack, as Jesus did. But we will get into that in another section.

I am a bird of prey enthusiast having kept birds for a while in my youth. One day I was at a falconry show where the falconer was flying a Black Kite. These birds are very bold and not troubled at all by the crowds. As he released the bird it just glided, swooping through the trees and the crowds, seemingly with no effort at all. At that moment the Spirit whispered to me – *This is how it is when you walk by the Spirit of God.*

I never forgot the lesson, and later, when considering the legalistic life I had once tried to live, I compared it to a mole than tunnels its way through the earth with great effort. This is a great picture of the contrast between a legalistic life based on law, and one that is led and empowered by the Spirit.

The life of the Spirit is based on a whole new nature, so it is a natural life, perfectly adapted to living the holy life God requires.

16. Gifts Of Grace

We will come back to the subject of living a holy life through grace, as that is the main concern of many that don't really understand grace. But before we do that, let's take a look at other aspects of a Christian life that are firmly grounded on the principle of grace.

The gifts of the Spirit are gifts of grace. The Greek word is '*charis*', which means grace – which means *undeserved favour*, and this is what the gifts of the Spirit are explicitly declared to be.

We stated earlier that law is powerless, whereas grace is powerful. For that reason anyone that wants to move in Kingdom power must believe in grace, so we can only move in power to the same degree that we are grounded in grace.

Legalistic people and churches have various ways of dealing with the powerlessness they experience under law. For some the solution has been to develop doctrines that claim the '*dispensation*' of power has passed with the passing of the original apostles, or with the passing of their era.

Then when they see people step up and express that power in the modern day, they are displeased with it and end up doing all they can to discredit it as false in support of their doctrines. They effectively become witch hunters, and, like Paul when he was Saul, they become persecutors of the church, despite the fact so many of us bear testimony to that power, and in this internet age there is so much of it to be seen if they only look for it.

Yet even in their own scriptures they read that – *the Kingdom of God is not a matter of words but of power (1 Cor 4:20)*.

From experience I found the truth is, to walk in power it is necessary to first understand and believe in grace, and then to come to believe in our true identity in Christ, which is also the product of God's grace. Once we understand and believe in our identity, which is *Christ in us*, that then naturally leads us to walk as Jesus did, as he also commissioned us to (*Gal 2:20, Mark 16:15-18*).

Law, on the other hand, requires us to be good enough. So if we ever try to do the works of God from a position of obedience to the law, the devil will always come along and point out our failings as a reason we can't do that, so it will undermine our faith. The fact is, working for the Kingdom is a battle, which at times can get messy, so we need to understand that God has taken care of everything that could stop us by his grace.

Then there is another problem that if we ever find success in doing the works of God from the basis of law, we will be induced by the enemy to become proud. Again, believing it is all based on grace is a defence against pride, so we can remain humble, crediting only God, no matter what God does through us.

It is quite revealing to read in the *Book of Acts*, that some of the miracles, signs, and wonders were done by men who were appointed deacons – i.e. servers. Both Stephen and Philip (the deacon) were mentioned as men who did these things. And Stephen then became the first martyr for whom he saw Jesus

standing at the right had of the Father to receive him into the Kingdom (Acts 6:1-6, Act 6:8, Acts 8:5-8).

The Spirit once said to me – *Humility is the currency of heaven.* Understanding grace is its foundation, which makes us very rich in real terms. From such richness, great works can follow.

17. Beginning

We will come to the subject of how to maintain a walk in the Spirit once we have begun it. But it will be helpful to take a look at how new believers can begin and progress in it, because there is a clear overlap between this and maintaining such a walk.

When a believer is *born again* their mind is not automatically renewed. Some fundamental things are certainly changed as they have made some decisions and they have found new faith. But the '*pattern*' of their mind is still worldly, so they have things to learn to bring their mind in line with their spirit.

Of course, at this point a lot can hinge on their pastors, or mentors. In broad terms, the job of a pastor or mentor is to smooth the path of those they care for that follow them. That may mean they are taught these truths of walking in the Spirit, or it can mean they are given false legalistic ideas where they will be forced to grow through them, and reject them, before they really see the real benefit of their new spiritual life.

When new believers get saved there is only one thing they initially know – *that their sins are forgiven*. And the enemy will even try to snatch that from them if he can.

For all of them, as new believers, they will still have weights and entanglements of the world from which they need to be released and disentangled. These come in many

forms, but they are often besetting sins, some of which they don't even recognise as such.

What Jesus made clear was, as mentors, or teachers, we can easily add to their load rather than help release them (*Matt 23:4*), so we need to be sure we have what it takes when we offer our services, or we may make their journey rougher rather than smoother.

For example, if your understanding of *Luke 9:23* and scriptures like it are the typical legalistic one, you may lead them into austerity and an ascetic religious life based on law, rather than leading them into a walk in the Spirit where there is freedom and liberty.

Of course, an austere life can be a good thing, but only if the Spirit is leading them there because then he will supply the grace to live it. But if it is mistaken as a way to achieve righteousness, then you will only add to their weights and entanglements, which may even take a lifetime to resolve in some cases.

The Apostle John shares with us the normal progression of a Christian life, showing us in broad terms the stages it should go through, and where it should lead.

In *1 John 2:12-14*, just before he defines the world and all that is in it, he writes to three stages of maturity of believer – *Children, Young Men, and Fathers*.

Children – *I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have*

been forgiven on account of his name..

Young Men – *I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

Fathers – *I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.*

In the first stage of spiritual life, as *children*, the only thing that is known is forgiveness of sins. For a time this is how it is. There is not yet any victory over sin, so they have not yet learned to overcome as the *young men* have.

For these *children*, during this stage, what they need is a constant reminder of the grace of the forgiveness of God, even as they are still failing. Such grace, we call mercy, and that is the milk they need at this time.

In that we are not letting go of the standard of holiness that God wants, but we are affirming the only way to that is to keep receiving the grace we need until we get that victory.

In this key stage of spiritual life they come to learn, and learn well, that the blood of Christ is more powerful than any sin or failure they experience. In fact it is a fundamental force of the supernatural universe. This is an important and foundational lesson for them, that they will need to come back to often, so this *failing but forgiven* stage of life is actually a vital and foundational one for solid spiritual growth. Pastors and mentors need to understand

this to be of any help to them.

Condemnation is an opposite and diabolical thing, rooted in the Law. What they need is the grace of mercy.

One proof that new believers are *born again*, and so are in fact the children of God, is that they cannot sit comfortable with sin. The Holy Spirit keeps them aware of their sin, but also constantly leads them to find forgiveness by the blood of Christ.

What often concerns many pastors is that a new believer may settle with their sinful problems and so begin to treat the grace of forgiveness as a license to sin. But the Holy Spirit does not allow that for a true believer, so it should remain a desire of every new believer to overcome what they know is sin, and their pastors need to trust this discipline of the Spirit, whilst loving them and caring for them, leading them always to mature in their faith to where they will overcome.

However, what will cause a problem is if their pastors and mentors turn to the false gospel of law, and legalism. This will trap them in their sinful condition and only resolve it by suppressing sin, which is not really a resolution at all. Then comes the temptation to become hypocritical, pretending to have victory, but where sin is only suppressed, but not resolved.

Only the walk of faith, knowing our true identity,

and learning to walk in the Spirit will truly, and practically, resolve sin, and that needs to be the goal of a pastor or mentor to lead them to mature to the next stage.

Once we see a new believer established in this walk of faith by the Spirit, then we should begin to see real victory. This is a process of realising the truth of identity; accessing the power of grace by faith; initiating the walk by the Spirit daily; and step by step taking every thought captive to make it conform to Christ through declarations of faith, thereby avoiding any pretences (*2 Cor 10:5*).

We also then learn about the schemes of the enemy and how he seeks to trip us and make us stumble, which, once learned, eventually puts us on the offensive against him, not just for ourselves, but on behalf of everyone God leads us to help. It is then that our young men become strong and start trampling the forces of darkness and evil.

Of course Satan knows what is coming if they get to that stage, so his work is to stall that in their spiritual infancy if he can, though in that he can generally only slow their development, not stop it, because in truth it is God he is working against.

We will say more later on this subject of taking every thought captive, but while we are on the subject let's mention the final stage of maturity, which is great reward.

In this stage of *Fathers*, we come to know him who is

from the beginning. As for Abraham, our father of faith, God himself becomes our shield and our great reward (*Gen 15:1*). Once we begin to discover that, from there on we will be good and ready for heaven as we develop a longing to be close to God.

We will also find ourselves developing more and more the heart of a father towards those that are behind us. They will become like dearly loved children to us. That will mean we are torn between staying to finish the work, and leaving to be with the Lord. But for all of us there is a right time to leave, so we will be patient and work for God by his grace until our time comes.

18. Taking Thoughts Captive

The Apostle Paul wrote of this as part of the path to maturity. That we *take every thought captive and make it obedient to Christ* (2 Cor 10:5).

Paul also writes about punishing every act of disobedience *once your obedience is complete* (2 Cor 10:6). As believers mature, the effect is to put them back in the driving seat of their lives so sin can no longer be their master.

Once sin is mastered, then acts of disobedience take on a different complexion, as it is now more a matter of a deliberate choice rather than a problem with a foothold or stronghold. It therefore becomes more appropriate to respond punitively, which can happen in a church, but it is mostly for those who already have a certain level of spiritual maturity, and victory.

Taking thoughts captive is what happens on the road to maturity. All sins and failures begin with a thought, so it is the thoughts that lead us astray that must be conquered.

It may seem strange and rather radical to say this, but sin for a believer is not the bigger problem. The blood of Christ is able to take care of any sin once we confess it, but what the enemy really wants comes after the sin where, through accusation, he tries to turn it into a whole identity.

That identity may in general simply be that of – ‘*sinner*’. But it may be more specific. For example if we find ourselves angry, he may relate it back to former aggressive behaviours and then try to define us by those behaviours – *e.g. thug, abuser, criminal*. All of these are a whole identity that Satan wants to impose on us to get us back into a walk in the flesh.

What should be our response to this?

Our response should be that we come back to affirming our true identity by faith, at the same time as rejecting these accusation of the false identity. They are the identical steps to the ones we take daily to initiate our walk in the Spirit, but they may be specifically targeted to counter an attack of the enemy that is designed to get us to accept a different identity.

This does not in any way deny the failure. If we did it, we must own it, and confess it. But at the same time we refuse to recognise what we did as an expression of our true selves, but of a stumble into the old nature. For that reason we must address it by faith, affirming the truth of who we are.

In the case of anger that we feel has become malicious, we deny this is part of our new and true nature. We declare it to be of the old nature that has been crucified on the cross with Christ along with our old sin nature. We then affirm the opposite of patience, gentleness, long

suffering, and love to be the truth of our new nature in which we now live. We affirm our new nature is *Christ in us*. That is our way to deal with every attack which is seeking to redefine us again by the old nature. We do it, as always, by faith.

We do this as often as we need to in a day, along with that daily affirmation where we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him each day – as covered earlier. .

19. The Flesh

The flesh is a term that is synonymous with our old nature. It is the nature that belongs to the old creature that has now gone and is replaced with the new now we are in Christ (*2 Cor 5:7*).

That means the flesh is no longer an identity we should accept as our true self. We can accept that it once defined us, but when we came to Christ we died to our old self, so that union that once existed between our old flesh nature and our soul is broken, now crucified with Christ on the cross.

When we speak of a nature, that is also synonymous with speaking of a spirit. Our spirit is where our nature comes from. Our flesh, that has the old nature, is the thing that is fallen. It is a spirit that was cut off from God and died as God is the only source of light and life. In exchange, as a new creature, we now have a new spirit, which is the Spirit of God, which has a whole new nature – the nature of Christ. We can therefore confess – *It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me (Gal 2:20)*.

So the question is – *Now I am born again, how should I think of the flesh?*

The first thing to say is, we should never own the flesh as our true self. This is where the battle is fought. The flesh is a spirit, and so it is very similar to demons who are disembodied spirits. It also works in a similar way, by lying to us to gain a hold over us, and trying to establish itself in our minds as our

true nature, which is no longer a valid claim.

However, even though its claim is false, it can be quite potent as it harps back to the days when it did define us. When we are drawn into old behaviour patterns, because our minds are not yet fully renewed, it seems to be making a strong claim that it is still our true nature. That is why we have to take thoughts captive to make them obedient to the truth of Christ, that the flesh no longer in any way defines who we now are, despite the fact we are sometimes tricked and tripped by it.

When it comes to the old flesh, we have to realise in some ways we can now treat it in a similar way to other attacking spirits or demons. We can command it to be silent and stop nagging in our inner ear. But the flesh does require some special treatment that is appropriate to it, that we wouldn't use on a demon. For a demon we cast it out, whereas for the flesh we die to it, and it is best not to get those two things mixed up. As the old version puts it – we mortify the flesh (*Rom 8:13*).

I just mention that because I like the idea of sending the flesh to the mortuary, but actually the mortuary for our flesh is the cross of Christ. To make sure it went there Jesus gave it his personal escort, carrying it in himself so it was nailed there in him. But as always, there is a part for us to play in that, and as always it is an act of faith. That is, by faith we '*reckon ourselves dead*' to the flesh, and at the same time '*reckon ourselves alive to Christ*' (*Rom 6*). Which is the same thing as to – *deny yourself and take up your cross* (*Luke 9:23*). As has already been covered.

As always, this key scripture of dying to the flesh is

legalistically misunderstood by many. It is primarily an act of faith. That is the only way to kill it. Our enemy would like us to substitute that for some kind of religious act or effort, but without this, that won't work. As in all things, to live the life we are called to, we have to walk by faith, always receiving grace, and that is fundamentally how we live, and how we overcome the flesh.

This is a battle of faith and truth over the very thing that defines us. In the end, by faith we overcome (*1 John 5:4*).

20. Our True Identity

Let's briefly reiterate what our true identity is as a believer in Christ.

As a born again believer, I am a new creature in Christ.

The old creature is gone and is no longer who I am.

I am a child of God.

The life I now live is the life of Christ in me, and he is holy, so my new life is completely holy in him.

As a new creature, I walk and am led by the Spirit of God.

The life I now live is established by faith and empowered by grace.

I am the righteousness of Christ, who gave me his life, and who made himself to be Sin on the cross for me in my stead.

It is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me.

I am a son of God, with all the rights, privileges, and inheritance of sonship in Christ who is the Son of God.

21. Maintaining

For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, (Prov 24:16a)

What makes a righteous man a righteous man is not that he never stumbles, but that when he stumbles, he gets up again.

The mind is invariably the place where Satan probes for access points. We have natural desires, all of which can have a sinful form of expression.

What we know of Satan and his schemes is, he waits for an ‘*opportune*’ time. Like Cain, the brother of Abel, sin comes crouching at the door. It doesn’t have entry, but it waits for an opportunity so it may enter.

There is no question that we as believers can stumble or fall. Take a look at the church of *Laodicea* (*Rev 3:14-22*). Or take a look at all the letters to the churches in *Revelation*. All but one had some kind of problem, and they all had challenges. The church of *Laodicea* had strayed from the path of God for them, and now through the message Jesus sent them, he is seeking to recover and restore them.

Our enemies are – the *World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*. To avoid all of this there is a simple solution – to maintain a walk by the Spirit. But once we have been tripped and stumble, we need to know the way back.

When we have stumbled, one thing the enemy will often try to do is to persuade us back onto the grounds of law. He

does this because he knows it will get us onto the treadmill of failure. Sometimes success becomes the access point of the Devil because he then leads us into pride, to believe we got there by ourselves and not by grace.

This is the time when God must prune us, cutting us back by humbling us. Receiving grace demands humility, and not the pride of self-belief. We have to know we can do *NOTHING* by ourselves (*John 15:5*), so there may be a season of failure where we try in our own strength, before we come back to this truth and again receive grace, both for forgiveness, and to walk by the Spirit again.

Sins have a spiritually blinding and dulling effect, so it needs God to bring us to conviction about it, the same as it took for us to come to faith in the first place. When we begin to see and perceive it, all we can do is cry out for God to grant us the grace of mercy and repentance. Even repentance is not possible for us without God initiating it.

In all of this God is working in us so we *will and act* (i.e. *want and behave*) according to God's good pleasure, while at the same time we are making our own free choices, knowing what is at stake as we choose, as the Spirit reveals it. When all is said and done, we are God's workmanship, not our own, but without God ever overriding that free will of ours that he works with until it conforms.

Therefore, our walk in the Spirit may be faltering, especially in the early stages. But as the Good Shepherd he is, he always picks us up and leads us back to the Way of Grace through Faith, which is the only way to live a genuinely fruitful

spiritual life.

22. Consecration

As a young believer I came to Christ with a wholesale consecration to him. That was a good start, even though I was a long way from learning how to live by grace. By wholesale, I mean I came in committing myself to serve him whatever the cost.

For many, they had a different experience because they were sold the prosperity gospel, that God will meet all their needs and wants.

For these ones they soon come to face trials which may not be what they expect, but God gets to work on them. They are then led by the Spirit to make a deeper commitment to follow Christ regardless of the cost.

Of course Jesus does promise to meet our needs, but at the same time he makes clear that he is our shepherd, our gardener, and our potter. And we are the branch, the sheep and the pot. He therefore gets to work on us, yet never bypassing our free will, but by leading us to good choices (*Phil 2:12-13*).

What set me on a good trajectory in my spiritual life is those calls that came from various preachers I followed to make a further wholesale commitment to Christ – to consecrate myself wholly to him, and sometimes it came with an awareness by the Spirit that it would be costly. This is especially true when we are aware of living below what we know God is calling us to. However, there can be a stumbling

stone here if we still think in legalistic terms. We treat it as a call to try harder, which will inevitably only bring us back here.

However, what God invariably wants from us is to cry out to him for more grace to live a better life, realising that without him we have no chance of fulfilling that desire. Sometimes the learning curve to get to this place can be a long series of failures, but he eventually leads us there. Then as we cry out to God it yields great results, because sometimes without even realising it, we have suddenly taken a significant step into his grace. Many come to grasp this without fully understanding it, but this life is lived more from the heart than the mind, so our mind will eventually catch up with how all things work for us with God.

If you feel you have slipped back, and maybe lost your first love like the Ephesians, or become lukewarm like the Laodiceans, this is your way back. Especially if you feel you have slipped so far there is no way back. What this may be for you is simply the end of the treadmill of law, and the beginning of a life based on grace.

If that is you then simply say a prayer of wholesale surrender, trusting him to fulfil what you say, and not yourself. The blood of Christ is more than enough to cover every sin and failure. So realise, you would not be here if the Good Shepherd were not guiding you back.

23. Instructions

When you begin to understand grace, one thing that may seem contradictory is the many instructions you find in the New Testament on how to live, what to do, and warnings of what to avoid.

This is true of all the apostles in their letters. For example: John warns us not to love the world; Peter warns us to avoid lust and sexual misbehaviour that belongs to our former life; Paul gives us many instructions on many things.

The question, of course, is how is this different to the law?

The first answer to that is, yes you can turn it into law, as many do. Which means having seen an instruction you then go off and believe you can live it on your own power as your own achievement, rather than understanding this is not possible and you must apply faith and receive grace to see it work for you.

Believing you can do anything without God is actually what the Apostle John calls – *The pride of life*. And that is a fundamentally worldly thing.

Just having the New Testament scriptures does not automatically get you off the principle of law. But if you look carefully at these instructions in the scriptures you will realise the writers always closely associate them with grace. Maybe you need to read it again to see that, praying that God will reveal it to you, as this is part of the second image in the

double image in the scriptures I was describing in the early chapters.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews even says, for those before Christ, under the Mosaic law, the problem was people did not combine it with faith (*Heb 4:2*).

But then we ask – *What faith were they expected to have in these times?*

For them, before Christ, if they were honest, the law would have done the same job of showing them they were unrighteous and therefore in need of another answer.

That meant they were forced to look forward in faith believing God would provide the answer they need, whatever it was.

By that faith they were therefore trusting in grace, and not on merit, believing God would come through for them, even though they didn't know how.

So for Abraham his faith was credited as righteousness before it was even available. And for Job, who seems to have been from a different place and culture, he said – *I know my redeemer lives and in the end he will stand upon the earth (Job 19:25-27)*. For him too, righteousness was credited to him for his forward looking faith, so God saw both of them as righteous men on account of their faith that God would come through for them. What we now know, that they didn't, was they were putting their hope in, and looking forward to, the

coming righteousness of Christ, which we in our day are now fully informed about.

For them, as for us, that righteousness produced a changed heart – what we now call *born again*. If you thought *born again* began with Jesus then how could he chide Nicodemus for not recognising his teaching about this whilst claiming to be a teacher of Israel (*John 3:10*). *Born again* was around long before, or none from that era would be saved (*John 3:5*), even though it was not yet known by the term *born again*.

Some years ago in Jerusalem I got into a conversation with an American Jew who was there to evangelise his Jewish religion. His message was basically that they were the chosen people, but I as a Gentile had a chance if I followed a select set of seven laws (not ten) that he was offering me. The ten, he thought, were just for Jews.

I had an interesting conversation with him about whether pride was a sin and whether self-righteousness was possible. But then as we were speaking, one of his elders came over that only spoke Hebrew, but managed to say to me in very broken English – *What matters is a changed heart*. You see, some get that message even without it being overtly preached to them.

When the disciples first received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they didn't have the New Testament. You may think they were therefore at a disadvantage, but not quite. You see, they also didn't have the temptation to then turn the New Testament scriptures into law, as we do. That left them to rely

wholly on the Spirit, to lead them in right paths, so they quickly learned how to walk by the Spirit, which is what we also need to learn, even though we have the scriptures and the many instructions that come with it.

However, the scriptures, including the instructions, do help us to learn quickly the way of the Spirit so we have another witness to what it is like to be led by him. But that doesn't mean you can leave the Spirit out of your endeavour to fulfil it, if you are so inclined, once again falling back on the principle of law which relies wholly on your own strength.

With each instruction, ask yourself...

Do I believe this is the will of God for me?

Do I actually believe I can do this on my own?

Do I understand I cannot truly do this without the Spirit?

Am I speaking a word of faith to release this into my life?

Am I trusting God to accomplish this in me?

Have I prepared myself for a walk in the Spirit today?

When we look at the letters, generally we find much of it is preparing us to realise the truth of who we are, so we can walk in that identity by faith, and then we come to see the instructions from that perspective – as an expression of our true self. Jesus told us the Spirit would reveal things to us. In other words, he – Jesus, would personally mentor us in our walk with him. The law never offered that. It only told us what to do, then left us to our own devices, and beat us when we failed.

When we compare the Law and the New Testament

instructions, there is a clear difference. The law just told them WHAT to do. But the New Testament gives more of an understanding WHY the instructions are given. The reason for that is the *New Covenant* is based on faith, and faith is rooted in knowledge, so by understanding the purpose of the instruction, we are better placed to believe in it and act on it.

The truth is, any violation of the law had consequences, and nothing has changed about that. The same consequences exist now under the *New Covenant* as they did back then under the law. But we have a greater understanding of what those consequences are. For example anger can lead to footholds and strongholds, and eventually to a murderous spirit gaining a hold over us.

We are informed of the way Satan can attack us through sin and get a hold over us in many ways.

We understand now that if we engage in sexual immorality we are not just sinning against our body, but we are uniting ourselves with the demons that have a hold over those we get involved with.

Both the scriptures and the Spirit are keeping us informed of the dangers of sin in a way that the law never did, except by assigning a relevant sacrifice for it. By that we come to not just know the rules, but to believe in the way God is leading us to live, so our walk is based on faith.

Another mistake that is made about grace is the belief that it is a '*soft touch*', never dealing with consequences for actions. But when we look at Jesus, who was full of grace and truth,

he never shied away from tough love, and hard truths. When he spoke to the religious leaders, he called out their hypocrisy. Later Stephen did the same, under clear inspiration of the Spirit, so the Spirit is the same as Jesus – that is his spirit.

Why did Jesus do this? Because love does not simply ignore sin. What love does is whatever is for the highest good, always seeking to redeem if it can. *Doing the 'highest good'* is the best definition we have of love. So to give the hypocrites the best chance of reforming their lives and avoiding destruction, Jesus spoke the necessary truth to them.

This was his love and grace in action; doing the best he could for them. Of course he knew their hearts were hard, and that many would not receive his words, but then in that case his words were doing the best to warn all present against being drawn into the same destructive religious practices. So in all things we see love and grace choosing the path of the highest good of everyone, including us, in all he said and did.

This is what loving our enemies looks like sometimes.

Then when we look at the Apostle Paul he teaches us to avoid vengeance, leaving that to God, and always to love. But he still says...

The one who doesn't work should not eat (2 Thes 3:10).

Keep away from any believer that doesn't live by the principles they know are right (1 Cor 5-11).

God will avenge the action of hostiles against us (2 Tim 4:14).

Evict the person who sins and doesn't repent from your fellowship (1 Cor 5:13).

Exhort each other to live up to their calling and avoid sin (Eph 4:1).

Commit the one who blasphemes to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme (1 Tim 1:20, 1 Cor 5:5).

We are ready to punish every act of disobedience once your obedience is complete (2 Cor 10:6).

Does this look like Paul was a soft touch? He called sin by what it was as that too was part of his God given responsibility. Love and grace don't bypass any of that. The key is, in every case he does what is for the highest good of all, which is what love does.

Sometimes the very worst thing we can do is not to confront a person with their sinful actions. Yes, we must not judge (i.e. pass sentence and condemn), and always be ready to forgive, leading people to redemption, but we should never cast away truth and fail to call sin by its proper name, or fail to take the proper action that is the highest good for all. When believers act sinfully, they need their fellow believers to do this. But never forgetting that if they repent, any sin can be dealt with before God by the blood of Christ.

However, even repentance doesn't mean they will not face

legal or other consequences where appropriate, but it does mean before heaven they will be forgiven and redeemed.

Having said all that because we shouldn't misunderstand what love and grace is, many will come to us that have problems and issues that need our help to escape the traps they are in. For them the key thing is that they want to be free and to overcome, once they know and accept it is a sin or problem. Then our work is to help them by pulling down their strongholds; uprooting their footholds; and overthrowing every grip the enemy has on them using the weapons we are given that not carnal, but mighty through God (*2 Cor 10:4*). All of this is part of God's favour – his *GRACE* and *LOVE*, to set them free, which is part of our service to them.

At the same time, what we must avoid is jumping ahead of the Spirit to try and achieve anything by our own strength. That will only end up pushing them back and entrenching their problems, so we have to bear with their failings, always helping them to realise the truth of their identity and calling until they overcome.

24. Discipline

Watchman Nee was a great man of God, mainly because he understood this whole principle of grace, so I recommend you take the time to read his books.

Not long after I realised that the discipline of God is one of the greatest expressions of God's grace we have, he confirmed that very thing to me.

In the first chapter of the gospel of John, he describes how the Word of God, was God, and he came to us in flesh, full of grace and truth, and gave us the *right* to be born of God, and become a child of God.

Some mistakenly think all people are the children of God. Some because it says this in *Act 17:29*. However, the word there is usually translated '*offspring*' rather than '*child*', as it is a different word to the one John is using. The Greek word there in *Acts* is '*genos*' – reflecting the fact that man as a creation is made in God's image. But the Greek word in *John 1* is '*teknon*' which means a child of God having God as a present mentor and Father. The first is like a biological father that has no contact with the child, compared to the second that is in a loving, caring, mentoring relationship.

We need to remember that 'Father' was a new term for referring to God when Jesus came, and for the Jews it was radical. It is also a rejected term by Islam, which is expressed in the *Dome of the Rock* Islamic shrine on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, where it is written around the base of the inside

of the dome – *There is one God and he has no children.*

However, Jesus taught us to pray ‘*Our Father*’ and to pray to him asking him directly for what we need.

The law never offered relationship like this. It was never intimately involved with us like this, which is why the Apostle Paul referred to it as ‘*dead letter*’.

When we come to the law, asking it to provide what we need, its answer is always – *Are you good enough?* And invariably our honest reply to that is always ‘NO’, so for us the law is impotent, and our accuser makes sure of it.

In the Letter to the Hebrews, chapter 12, we read that we are blessed to have a *Father* that disciplines us for our good. By contrast, in the book of Galatians, the law is described as a ‘*schoolmaster*’ who was put in charge for a while, only to lead us to Christ (*Gal 3:24*). One beats us when we fail, but the other cares for us, and mentors us. One is strict, and the other forgiving, while still correcting us and showing us the way. The law only cares that its standard is upheld. But a Father always cares for the good of his child. They develop a wholly different relationship with us.

I remember seeing a poster image of a Tibetan monk on a crosswalk raising his middle finger to a lorry driver that was clearly honking at him to hurry up. And the caption read – *When you miss your morning meditation.*

This is actually an image that many Christians will relate

to because they are living a legalistic life, where if they fail, they are inwardly punished.

The reality is, God does not change his view towards us from day to day, or moment to moment, regardless of how we perform. But he is a good Father, and he is simply committed to nurture us to live a life that is blessed; always aware of his loving presence; bearing fruit; full of love, joy, and peace; and enjoying his blessings.

Our God is so patient with us he takes what we give him, and simply waits for us when we neglect him. He doesn't force his way in, as the law tries to do. What God wants more than anything with us is *QUALITY TIME*. He wants to be intimate with you, and he is prepared to wait for it. That's his love language, so if you want to bless him, just learn to speak it.

I wrote this elsewhere, but it bears repeating here. Someone asked us in church to pray for them to have a child as they were having trouble conceiving.

When I went to God about it, I first listened for any word God was speaking about it. On this occasion there was a strange sense that this was an easy prayer, and was almost unnecessary. Later I discovered they had already conceived, which explained that prophetic sense. However, I did get more of a prophetic download on their case as God showed me their full future family, and told me he was '*excited*' about the child that was already on the way.

'Excited' seemed to me to be a strange word from God about himself, so my question back to him was – *How can*

you as God be excited when you are the same yesterday, today, and forever? God's reply to me was – Yes, I am, but I am eternally excited about this child.

God will often throw a prophetic comment at you that takes some time to process, but ends up causing a paradigm shift in your thinking.

I came to realise God was not just telling me that he is eternally excited about this child that was coming, but that he is eternally excited about every one of us who are his children, including me! After all, in scripture it says we are the 'apple of his eye' – which is basically scripture saying exactly the same thing.

You see, as a born again believer who is now living an eternal spiritual life, you are like a golden thread in the tapestry of God's eternal universe that affects God's creation infinitely, because by definition eternity is infinite. When you think about that, why would God not be eternally excited about you?

25. License

This brings us to discuss something important, which is the whole possibility of grace becoming license to sin. It is the fear of this that has led many pastors to reject it altogether, which means they are thrown back onto the failing principle of law.

In some ways, this is understandable, first because the scriptures do warn against abusing grace as license, and secondly because for many, they simply don't understand how grace can work?

Then there is another problem that recently there was a movement in churches where they realised from the scriptures that grace is a real and necessary thing, so an idea came along that we must discard all forms of instruction, just in case it is interpreted as law, and only speak of forgiveness and mercy.

However, if those that thought that way stopped and considered for a moment, they would realise the scriptures don't do this. Instead the scriptures are full of instructions at the same time as speaking constantly about grace.

The clue is therefore there that somehow these things must fit together.

So what is the difference between this and law?

First and foremost it is the constant recognition that we are

incapable of fulfilling any of it apart from the grace of God, so we are wholly dependent on him.

This significantly changes things. Initially when people come to us they will have many problems they simply can't solve. There will be habits, addiction, bad practices, and desires. There will be pockets of emotional damage along with the footholds and strongholds that came through them.

All of this means that even after they are *born again* where they become a *new creature*, for a time they will be constantly failing. Law and grace have two very different responses to that. The law will instantly condemn them, whereas grace will offer forgiveness, assuring them of their new identity in Christ, and leading them to speak a better thing into their life through confession and declaration, based on faith and the instructions of what it means to live a holy life.

In other words, grace is compassionate and tolerant, while at the same time continuing to hold to a good standard.

That, after all, is the goal of the Spirit and the place that he is leading them. But we must all understand it is impossible to get there without faltering and needing the grace and forgiveness of God.

When we begin to think in these terms, we become extremely compassionate to those that are failing and are distressed by that failure. It means we can absorb into our churches the most broken people, so we can care for them while they change. We can put our trust in the work of the Spirit with them so that it is only a matter of time before they begin to

see victory, because we know that God and his grace is the true power behind our conviction.

Again, as pastors, we are putting no confidence in our ability to change them as we would if all we had was law, but we are looking to God to show them the same grace to change that he showed us.

Once while I was in college in my twenties, I invited a friend to come to a church where I was preaching. He was a guy with a keen mind and the typical confident single mindedness that you get with students at his age.

He was impacted by the meeting, and later, after consideration, became a Christian and joined a local church in the city where he lived. At the time he was living with his girlfriend, who he clearly loved, as this was a perfectly acceptable thing to do in his mind, as it was for many.

This church got to know him, and accepted him, and nobody even mentioned this aspect of his lifestyle. They just let him grow in faith and grace, and helped him by loving and caring for him. Then, after a year, God spoke to him directly about getting married, which he did soon after.

You see, with this guy, if they had tried to solve that problem before the Spirit of God picked it up, I believe they would have driven him out with him refusing to conform to their controlling demands. He was just that kind of guy. What was needed was for them to stay in step with the Spirit, focusing on the most important thing which was his relationship with God, that they knew in the end would bring

that issue up when the time was right.

What this shows is, the walk in the Spirit for both the new believer and the pastors is the vital thing. For a while with *EVERY* individual, there is much that we have to accept while God works on them, and in all we do to help them, we must stay in step with the Spirit.

Of course, once they realise their problem, and are concerned about it, they are coming close to solving it. But that will only be by receiving more grace from God to overcome. Eventually what will happen with them is they will come to take every thought captive, which will bring them to obedience, but it is all by the grace of God, which they need to understand.

The problem that many churches have where there is a confidence in the law, they will step ahead of the Spirit and try to change people themselves, which in the end may suppress sin, but it won't solve it.

Of course there is always a time when the Spirit of God leads us to challenge each other on aspects of our lives where we should be doing better, and this should be a normal thing. But it needs to flow out of a good relationship and a mutual confidence that we are each led by the Spirit, and only have the concerns of the Spirit when we do it. And that relationship must first be built before the Spirit will use us in that way. This is what pastoring and mentoring needs to be.

My mother shared with me an experience she had when she was first *born again* as a young woman. When she returned to the church the following week, one of the women of the

church came to her, tapped her firmly on the head with one finger, and said – *Where is your hat?* Of course it was a tradition of that church to wear a hat, but it nearly drove her out. Was that something the Spirit of God wanted for her then? The truth is this church was quite legalistic, and in hindsight it went on to cause her many problems that took her a long time to resolve.

In a similar way, I have seen a pastor drive out a couple who were new converts that came to his church with debts and the pastor instructed them to tithe. His idea was that this was their way out of debt, which he frequently preached. It's hard to say whether the pastor was thinking of his own vested interest, or if it was an aspect of his faith. But in any case he made the mistake of imposing it on this new couple as a law, as they clearly didn't have such faith, and which they could only interpret as exploitation. What would have been better in this case would be for the church to help them financially, and so believe for them. Then they may have stayed, where their faith may have grown to the point of giving sacrificially. Maybe this was not the right church for them.

What this does highlight is in every case we are dealing with unique individuals so there cannot simply be a rule or law for all, and we must always be led by the Spirit in our interaction. Each have to live according to their faith. Church is a place where we exchange faith, but we haven't yet reached total unity, even if we are progressing towards it. Law imposes everything, and it is the same for all. Whereas under faith and grace each grows at their own pace, and each are at a different stage, so only the leading of the Spirit will serve to enable us

to minister to one another.

One of the greatest challenges we face is that when we learn something by the leading of the Spirit one day, we don't then turn it into a law the following day, or somewhere down the line. If we do that there is a good chance the Spirit will then move the goal posts to teach us not to do it. Jesus did a lot on purpose to offend religion, so we shouldn't be surprised if he does that to us when we revert to living by the principle of law.

With every person that comes to us, we need to show them grace and wait for the leading of the Spirit if we are to help or see them change.

We also need to be prepared to carry on loving them if they don't seem to change, and never resort to the law. God always seems to send a few challenges like this.

I can think of a time where a woman in the church had an unbelieving husband, and they clearly loved each other, but he had no spiritual level to him whatsoever. However, to stay involved with his wife he would come to church with her. And this went on for years. In this case the church just accepted and loved him, regardless. And then suddenly something happened and he got *born again*. I then remember having a very spiritual conversation with him where he suddenly stopped and said – *You know, I would never have believed I would be having a conversation like this with you just a few months ago*. His spiritual lights had suddenly come on and they were bright. With such a person there is no other option than to wait and pray, trusting only God to do the work in his time.

What we need to always realise is that in every case we are dealing with someone else's child, who loves them in a measure we can never really comprehend, as he does us.

To share one more example, I was led by the Spirit to go and evangelise on the streets of London during the London Olympics of 2012. There I joined an initiative that was pulling in many Christians from around the world to help. For one of those groups, there were about 30 of them; mostly young people in their late teens and twenties, and they were assembled from many nations and churches.

One day they decided to go to St. Pauls Cathedral to preach the gospel, and because they had got to know me and had heard about my work with *'Healing on the Streets'* they invited me to go with them.

There in front of the steps of the Cathedral, on a warm sunny day, seven or eight of them preached the gospel to all the people on the steps, one after another, and then I did the same.

Then when we were done, they went to the people and asked them if anyone needed healing. Upon which they came back with a young lesbian couple, where one of them was on crutches. Her story was, she fell 20 feet (about 6 meters) onto concrete and smashed her hips, knees, and ankles in the fall some years earlier.

This whole group of 20 or 30 then gathered around her with me leading, and we prayed for healing, upon which she was instantly healed with her waving her crutches over her

head.

Now, this was a great miracle, and God prophetically told me something like this was coming that very morning. But for some of these youngsters, that came from different churches, it seemed to be quite an anomaly. First because they had never seen a healing like that before, but also because they were having trouble understanding why God would heal people in a homosexual relationship.

It is times like this where the legalism we live under is challenged. For me, it was no problem. First because I had spent long enough on the streets bringing healing to people who were sometimes the most broken people imaginable, where I had sensed the immensity of God's love for them. But also because at this time I knew and understood the grace of God.

If this lesbian couple then came to the church of some of these youngsters, could they be accepted and loved?

For some I believe the answer would be NO. They would not be allowed to bring such a problem into their church.

This is where we must ask the question of what Jesus would have done. And I think the answer is clear from the scriptures he would have loved and accepted them like any other as this is exactly the kind of person he came for.

Such people need time to get to know God, both

directly and through us, to come to him and change. For all of us we need to be receiving and accepting such people in, not to impose our law on them, but to give them encounters with the Spirit that will change them for real. We also need to be patient while that work is done, no matter how long it takes.

Some will then ask – *What if they don't change?*

My answer to that is, go back and look at what you are offering them and check that it is really based on the grace and mercy of God, because that is the only thing that can really help them.

In short, that answer is, blame yourself and not them. But never resort to the principle of law.

Of course, if you ever meet a person that genuinely abuses grace as license, you may be faced with a challenge. But ask yourself, who are you running this church for? When people do this kind of thing it is sometimes because there is a demonic stronghold in their lives that we must break, so it is our work to help them by deliverance.

But another possibility is that they never really got *born again* and so don't have the normal conviction you would expect for a true believer.

In this case the temptation will be to revert to the law, but again I ask, who are you really running this church for? Would you really abandon the teaching of grace that is the only thing that can really help believers, so you can deal with

those who abuse it, or would you continue to teach grace?

In the end such a case must be resolved by prayer, and if their lifestyle is impacting the church you must be willing exclude them and part ways. But in all of that we must never abandon our belief and trust in God's grace and mercy as for believers it is the only real source of power we have.

26. Epistle of James

The Epistle of James raises a real problem for some, as it did for Martin Luther, the leader of the reformation in the 16th century. He called it a '*book of straw*' as it didn't seem to fit well with the epiphany he had on living by faith rather than works.

However, both the early church fathers, and those in Luther's time, decided this epistle was divinely inspired and must be included in the canon of scripture.

For the same reason, we must take a look at this epistle as it continues to cause the same problem. The reason is, this epistle is part of that 'double image' I mentioned at the beginning, where it can either be given an interpretation based on *LAW* or another based on *GRACE*.

Scripture often raises challenges like this, forcing us to seek God and to also search the rest of scripture to find wisdom to solve these conundrums that God give us. Many of the words of Jesus have these challenges.

On the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul, it was said of the Berean Jews that they were of more noble character than others Paul met who persecuted him, and they searched the scriptures eagerly to be sure what he was telling them was true. Their respect for the scriptures showed their nobility.

In fact, it is the Apostle James that encourages anyone

that lacks wisdom to ask God for it, and he promises to those that are not *'double-minded'*, God will give them wisdom generously without finding fault (*James 1:5-6*).

When he points to double-mindedness there, he is not just pointing to confusion or ignorance, but to a moral dilemma of being singular about the truth, trusting God to make things clear, and not ready to compromise if the message that comes back is not the one that was expected or preferred. This kind of single mindedness is the essence of nobility, which was the very thing that many of the religious leaders lacked that Jesus met.

To give an example of this, I once had a discussion with a pending leader of a new church on how he was planning to lead and the principles he intended to follow. In that discussion I raised the instructions of Jesus that to be the one that rules we must be like the youngest, and that the greatest of us must be like a servant (*Luke 22:24-28*).

To that I got an angry reaction from him where he snapped back with the scripture – *they should obey their leaders and submit to them (Heb 13:7)*, which was something I immediately took as a red flag on this person becoming a leader.

There were actually two problems here. One was the idea this person had of what leadership is in the church. And the other was that this person saw no problem with simply selecting one scripture over another, according to his preferred view, rather than trying to understand how these scriptures fit together.

For me, the latter of these was the bigger problem because it meant there could be no real discussion, and they showed little actual respect for the scriptures, so the lessons with this person would only likely be learned the hard way, by mistakes.

That is always something that God seeks to help us avoid if possible, so he always tries to speak to us first. But if we don't listen, God is still able to handle it, but the road is likely to be much bumpier for all concerned – both for the leader, and the church.

Paul says, to be a leader is a noble task, so it requires noble character to do it as it should be done. That has to include a willingness to learn, no matter who is raising an issue.

For this particular issue of submission to leaders, I don't want to get too deep into it, but my resolution is that whenever the scriptures speak of submission, it is speaking of voluntary submission only, and never forced submission. This applies to submission of church members to leaders; submission of wife to husband; submission of one to another; and even our submission to God, all of which the scriptures speak about.

To miss this truth is a key thing as it will inevitably bring a church into a worldly form and structure, which is actually very prevalent in churches in our time. This does therefore apply to our main topic of law and grace, because those with a legalistic mind-set will naturally gravitate to this kind of worldly dictatorial rule, and that, as most of us know, can go badly wrong.

One surprising thing is that God often does not block such leadership, but allows it to go ahead. And he uses the challenge of it to mature and grow a church through the challenge of it so at least some of the people learn not to simply give up their freedom in Christ.

With the Apostle Paul, we even find with tears he prophesied wolves would come in among the congregations he founded and loved, wanting to exploit them and take away their freedom, but he was nevertheless guided by the Spirit to leave as this was a challenge God wanted them to face and overcome. We even see the commendation of Jesus to churches where they do handle such challenges and resolve them.

Both Paul and James speak out against the kinds of oppression that can come to churches, making us aware of the challenges we face of the world invading the organised church, with its false agendas, as it so often does.

Coming back to this problem with the epistle of James on the topic of law, faith, and grace, we can bring it into sharp focus by comparing two scriptures; one from Paul and the other from James:

This from Paul...

*However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.
(Rom 4:5)*

And this from James...

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:17).

This again appears to be a contradiction, so how can we understand it? One says we are righteous without works, and the other says we must have works or our faith is worthless.

For the legalistic mind, this is interpreted to say – yes we are righteous by faith, but now we must go and do works to validate it.

But for the one who understands grace, what this says is – faith will always naturally produce the corresponding works. If it doesn't then we can't really have faith because these are unavoidably tied together.

For one it is calling for a forced life of labour. For the other it is trusting the walk in the Spirit to be a natural life that naturally yields the result of works.

One decouples faith and works. And the other claims it is tightly coupled and can't be separated.

What the way of law says is – *if it burns don't touch it*. But the way of faith and grace says – *if you know it burns you won't touch it*. This is a little simplistic as there are two different natures involved. The first is like a rebellious child that will be compelled to do whatever they are told not to. And for the other the command is redundant as they will do the right thing

naturally anyway. It is also a little simplistic as we are really talking about things that are sinful, but it is a good illustration of the difference in the ways of living and walking.

In the end the message of grace is – we need to trust that faith, through the new nature, brings a natural response through the empowerment of the grace it releases. And that is wholly different to trying to make it happen by our own effort in our own strength.

To see this clearly in scripture, we can point to two apparently contradictory verses that appear together, bringing this issue into sharp focus:

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose (Phil 2:12-13).

The truth is, we have free will, and God doesn't override it, but he works to cause us to align our mind and will with his according to the truth so that in the end we come to fulfil his good purpose for us.

The way of law, by contrast, makes demands of us, but then leaves us to our own devices, with a nature that is not even inclined to obey. Whereas with this way of grace God works on us by the new nature of his Spirit, always leading us by grace through faith, making us his workmanship so we come to naturally fulfil his will and purpose.

27. Law vs Grace

After all that has been discussed, let's make a concise comparison of life under the principle of law, compared to life under the principle of grace.

Law: Powerless / Grace: Powerful – The law offers a good standard, but contains no power to keep it for a broken being, as we all are. Grace on the other hand, is almost by definition the very power of God, delivered to us by the cross. We plug in by faith, and switch on the power by confession, for all things.

Law: Effort or Labour / Grace: Faith – Law requires our own effort or labour so we live by what we ourselves can achieve. However, the nature of flesh is not equipped to do anything near God's standard. Grace demands only the connection of faith, along with confession to release the power of God.

Law: Schoolmaster / Grace: Father – We can only relate to the law like a schoolmaster that beats us and condemns us when we fail. With grace we have a Father who trains us, encourages us, mentors us, loves us, disciplines us, cares for us, and forgives us when we fail.

Law: Old Nature - Flesh / Grace: New Nature – Spirit – The nature of flesh is broken and naturally evil, having become separated from God and selfish at core, despite its apparent good deeds. Grace is the principle of the Spirit, leading us into a natural life that is pleasing to God, and giving

us unlimited undeserved favour, accessing all of God's goodness.

Law: Sin / Grace: Righteousness – Under law, Sin is our identity. Under grace Righteousness is our identity – the righteousness of Christ. Christ took our identity of Sin upon himself on the cross and separated us from it.

Law: Independent / Grace: Dependent – Law is a way to live independently of God in our fallen nature, seeking to develop an independent righteousness of our own, which in truth, by heaven's standard, is just filthy rags. Grace is wholly dependent on God, for mercy; for favour; for walking in the Spirit; for gifts; for power to live God's way, naturally.

Law: Exposed / Grace: Hidden – Under law we are weak and exposed to the attacks of the enemy. Under grace we can live by the Spirit and be hidden and protected with Christ in God (*Col 3:3*).

Law: Pride / Grace: Humility – Success under law leads us to pride, independence, and self-righteousness, which is failure. Grace demands and fosters humility as its successes are entirely through God and for his glory.

Law: Stumble / Grace: Walk – Law only trips us and condemns us. Grace makes us walk securely in the Spirit, leading to upright living as the life of Christ is expressed through us.

Law: Persecute / Grace: Persecuted – Law doesn't

understand grace as its thinking is worldly and the principle of grace makes no worldly sense to it. So law persecutes grace, as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, the child of promise. Grace responds to persecution with grace and commits the matter to God and to his power, to bring those under law to grace.

Law: No Favour / Grace: Favour – Law is strict, so it condemns and does not forgive. Grace is constantly merciful and a source of undeserved favour.

Law: Me / Grace: Christ – Under law I have to live my own broken, fallen, and evil life. Under grace I get to live the life of Christ.

Law: Book / Grace: Spirit – Under law I live by the book as best I can. Under grace I live in relationship with the Spirit, who is also the author of the Book so he will explain it to me and teach me from it.

Law: Earth / Grace: Heaven – Law is a worldly principle designed only to expose the evils of this age on Earth. Grace is my access to a new heavenly life above that begins even now on the Earth.

Law: Mole / Grace: Eagle – Under law I live chiselling my own path under the rigours of forced labour, like a mole that burrows under the Earth. Under grace I live a free and natural life, like an eagle soaring above the Earth.

Law: Old Covenant / Grace: New Covenant – Under law I am under an old and broken covenant, that was broken even

before I began, like the tablets of Moses. Under grace I am under a whole new covenant that depends wholly on God, to which he is totally committed to fulfil on my behalf.

Let's complete this now...

Under law I live clothed in the rags of my own righteousness. Under Grace I am clothed with Christ.

Under Law I am in control. Under grace, though I have free will, God is in control through my new nature and I am his workmanship.

Under law I am a slave. Under grace I am free.

Under law I am heavily burdened. Under grace I take the yoke of Christ which means I am light and in a place of rest.

Under law my life is forced, but under grace my life is natural.

Under law I am timid and a failure, finding it difficult to approach God. But under grace I am bold, boldly approaching the throne of grace.

Under law I deprive myself to please God. Under grace I deny I am my old self and confess I live the new life to please God.

The list goes on, and the contrast is huge. To put it simply and succinctly, it is the difference between living cursed, and living blessed.

28. Denial & Confession

CONFESSION - By GRACE Through FAITH

Using this confession, by faith alone, throw the switch and apply the power/grace of God to your life. Make this a DAILY confession (*Luke 9:23*).

I am a new creature in Christ.

I am no longer the old creature I once was.

I am born again by the Spirit of God.

I am now a new creature with a new nature.

DENY YOURSELF

I DENY I am that old creature with that old nature.

That is no longer who I am.

TAKE UP THE CROSS

My old nature died on the cross in Christ.

I am now dead to SIN.

FOLLOW ME

The life I now live I live by faith in the Son of God.

My new life is now Christ living in me.

I have been made the righteousness of Christ.

I am now led by the Spirit of God.

SPECIFICS (examples)

I confirm I am dead to all anxiety.

I put all anxiety on the cross.

I confirm I am dead to all hatred and malice.
I put all hatred and malice on the cross.

I confirm I am dead to all wrong desires.
I put all wrong desires on the cross.

I affirm I am a person of peace.
The peace of Christ is my peace.

I affirm I am a person of love.
The love of Christ is my love.

I affirm I am filled with the Joy of the Spirit.
The joy of Christ is my Joy.

..etc.

SCRIPTURES

And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (*Luke 9:23*)

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. (*Rom 8:13*)

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (*Rom 6:11*)

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. (*Rom 6:14*)

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (*Gal 2:20*)

"The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent." (*John 6:29*)

QUESTIONS

Am I chiselling or switching?

Am I living by faith or by (labour) works?

To what specifically should I apply the blood?

Is there anything specific I must reckon myself dead to?

What is there of Christ I want to express?

Am I living by law or by grace?

Am I living a holy life naturally? .

29. Where Churches Falter

This brings me to a key part of the message on where churches falter.

There are many different reasons people seek to become church leaders. Some for a job and career; Some for influence as it gives them a platform; Some for status; Some because they simply want to serve God; and some through other reasons or a mixture of these.

The Apostle Paul didn't seem to care too much whether the motive was good, but he certainly did care about the message they carried.

What he said was – *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! (Gal 1:8)*

Then if we read the whole letter we find his overriding concern was that the church may be bought back under the law and so fall from grace.

In his letters he called the law a curse. He called it a ministry of sin and death. He called the law weak and miserable principles. He said it cannot justify. It cannot save. He said it cannot overcome sin. He said it is incapable of restraining self-indulgence. He said law is the basic principle of the world so it is worldly. He spoke of those that sought to impose the law as seeking to rob them of freedom, and referred to them as wolves. He then warned Timothy to watch

his life and doctrine closely as it is a matter of life and death for his hearers.

Paul, of course, said all this having once been completely under law, even in way that all the other apostles had not.

When you add to this the indictments of Jesus on the religious leaders and the teachers of the law in his day, you realise this is a serious matter, and it is coming from the very mouth of God. In the whole of the gospels you will not find Jesus speaking to anyone in such grave terms as these. Not even obvious sinners. Not even Romans. Then, later, when Stephen essentially said the same things to the religious leaders, and was martyred for it, we see Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father in heaven to receive him as the first martyr for the faith.

In my time I have seen or learned about the good, the bad, and the ugly of church, both modern and historical. Some of it is SHOCKING, and it forces us to ask the question – *How could this happen?* However, not all of it seems so bad on the surface, as for the religious leaders I am talking about. If the words of Jesus are taken seriously, they had become the masters of disguise, so they developed a religious veneer that was able to fool the masses.

When it comes to overt sin, word soon gets out, so such an organisation has its limits before it is brought down by exposure. But the churches with a respectable veneer can go badly wrong, and yet have a much greater durability as their demise is not so easily recognised by worldly people, or by legalists that don't really know the true principle on which

church should operate.

Legalism in churches is therefore rife. I remember *Derek Prince* saying this very thing. He said it is the biggest problem the church faces.

The result is churches have learned to function in a powerless way, yet suppressing sin through the law to maintain respectability and ensure the survival of the church.

Of course, here I am talking in extreme terms, whereas they all exist on a spectrum, somewhere between legalism and grace. Many, or even most, know the truth that salvation is by grace alone, so they have the initial footing. But what they lack is a clear understanding of what should follow – that all should be based in a similar way on faith and grace.

Within any church there are a number of individual members, who are all different in some way, and so are impacted by all this in different ways and to different levels.

My experience suggests there are some that live mainly from their gut, or the heart, or somewhere like that (preferably not the liver) and are not impacted so much by the doctrines of the church, mostly because they simply don't listen. On the other hand, there will be others that are much more inclined to live intellectually that are significantly impacted by doctrine. In this way God seems to have levelled the playing field so intellect is not necessarily such an advantage or blessing.

So, both individuals and churches live on this spectrum,

with each surviving spiritually, to one degree or another, in their own way.

Of course, it is God that ultimately cares for each individual, and the same is true for churches. As we discussed earlier, most of us individually pass through a legalistic phase where we learn mostly by failure. For churches that choose ineffective principles, God uses them to grow people through that phase. But when they get to the point where they outgrow it, and begin to realise its shortcomings, God will then transplant them, and move them on to better. Either that or the whole church will progress and grow together into new and better principles, which is usually the better way.

Leaders are the biggest influence on all of this. Although, if the church really functioned on New Testament principles, this would be far less the case, and the church would be far more likely to grow through those failing phases together, rather than by individual transplantation.

If we are blessed to have leaders that understand grace, they will smooth the pathway of new believers to maturity, which is the best way. That doesn't mean there will be no failure phase, but the way through it should be much easier. If we were better informed as new believers, we would take care to pick the best leaders we can find. But as we are all incredibly naïve in the early years, that is not really possible unless we get the advice of someone we know and trust that understands grace and the difference between that and law.

Whether the path is rough or smooth, God will lead us through. Many of the instructions given by the apostles serve

a similar purpose of smoothing the way, if only we realised it.

The real reason why God has led me to write this book is because we are now in the *end-times*. In fact as I am writing this I am led to release another book, which is the second of my *end-times* series, that is designed to prophetically inform us so we can chart a course through the difficult times that are coming, and be victorious in it. For that reason; because the end is approaching, God seems to have accelerated things, so it is time for the church to reach a level of victory and glory that it has never seen before. It is therefore necessary for people and churches to come to fully understand grace, and this book is a tool for that purpose.

Note that all of my Christian books are available free on my website. That includes the *end-times* series, and my book on the original principles of church that must also be rediscovered in our times – *The Original Church to Come by Trevor Maddison*.

I will include an Appendix on this matter of original church as that is a key book for our time, and the way the church can once again become dynamic, as it was in the first century.

<https://trevormaddison.com/>

30. Final Words & Activation

I said at the beginning, I wanted to write this book for a long time. My reason is I have long believed it is the single greatest thing I can do to advance the cause of the Kingdom of God. But even with that conviction, I still had to wait for the Spirit of God to lead me to do it.

Actually, there is another book on the way that is almost complete. All it needs is a bit more polish. I had written most of it before I started this one, but the Lord gave me a definite date to release it, which is 1 June 2026, and he then interjected that work with this book, to be released before it, so somehow I sense they are related.

That coming book is about the *end-times*, which we are now in, and it has prophetic revelations in it that are specifically for the purpose of preparing the church to be everything it needs to be in these times.

That gives me a deep conviction that this book on grace has the same purpose. That's how important I feel its message is. However, it is comforting to know that Jesus said – HE would build his church. If this message is now coming to its fullness it is because now is when he wanted it.

We may ask – *If it is so important, why didn't we get it before now?* It's a good question. One answer is, its message has been there all along so we can't say we didn't have it.

But the other answer is, it has been part of the eternal learning curve for every individual and the church to do things its own way, before discovering God's way. Then the lesson is learned far more thoroughly than it ever could be without that experience. So what I am saying is, it is all part of God's plan.

We already had a glimpse of it in the early church, and there have been pockets of it seen throughout church history, but that was only designed to whet our appetite and let us know it is there to be had. But now comes the time when there is payback on all that difficult learning, where we get to see the real fullness of what the church has always been about.

What we should come to realise is it is actually more glorious than anything we imagined, so if you are scared by the *end-times*, I wouldn't be so concerned if I were you. You will discover living in these times is actually an immense blessing, and when it is done you will look back on it and say you would not have missed it at any price. That's what we have coming.

Within this message is not just blessing, but superior weaponry that makes us hobbit-like creatures formidable to the enemy that has before now inflicted so much defeat. Now it's his turn, where everything he has done is returned on his own head, while we harvest the souls he thought he had secured and were his. No wonder he gave the message of God's *GRACE* such a hard time.

ACTIVATION

As you made it this far, that brings me to the most important part of this book, which is to activate this message in your heart and life by an act of *FAITH*, as God has specifically instructed me to lead you to do.

As with the text of this book, the cover design was also given to me prophetically, by inspiration of the Spirit of God, through the gift of prophecy, which is a mighty *GIFT* of God's *GRACE*.

MEDITATE of that image and allow it to become embedded in your mind and heart.

The *ORANGE* colour is a colour of the rainbow which symbolises promise, and aligns with the *Seven-Fold Spirit of God*. Orange aligns with the *Spirit of Knowledge*, which is the knowledge of *TRUTH*, which is the basis of *FAITH*. It is also the colour of *FIRE* because through faith, power is released. So understand that the colour of this book, while you meditate on it, will release the *POWER* of *GOD* into your life.

Look at the car and the way it is powering along in the race. This is you, now powered along by God's *GRACE*, racing forward, not in your own strength, but through the engine of the *SPIRIT* that God has put within you. As you press that accelerator, the power is released, driving you forward to *WIN*.

Look at the word – GRACE. It is a play on words, but given by God, that you are now to become God’s – GRACE-RACE-ACE, powering forward to win the PRIZE that God in Christ has called you heavenward for, that you were always destined for.

Know for sure that **GRACE WORKS**, so whatever went before that only proved *WORKS DOES NOT WORK*, is now past and gone. From now on the truth of God’s amazing grace will *SET YOU FREE* to be what God made you for, and has now, by his *GRACE*, led you to.

Prayer...

I NOW TAKE THE SEAT OF AUTHORITY AND DECREE THAT THE GRACE OF GOD SHALL NOW AND HENCEFORTH, WITHOUT DELAY, BE FULLY ACTIVATED IN MY LIFE, FOR VICTORY; FOR THE PULLING DOWN OF ENEMY STRONGHOLDS; AND FOR BRINGING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD, TO BE ESTABLISHED HERE ON EARTH FOR MYSELF; FOR MY FAMILY; FOR THE CHURCH OF CHRIST; FOR MY REGION; FOR MY COUNTRY; AND FOR THE WORLD. AMEN.

BE BLESSED.

APPENDIX 1 – Original Church

This is about my book – *The Original Church to Come* by Trevor Maddison.

Even though this was not my first book, in many ways it goes back further than any of the others for the simple reason I was taken to church from a very early age. Many people just seem to accept what they are raised in but for me I tend to question everything, so as I grew church certainly got that kind of scrutiny.

The thing is, for as far back as I remember I always felt church was not quite what it should be – and maybe not even close. Though I couldn't dismiss it altogether because at times I was deeply impacted by it.

Then I got *born again* and read the Bible from a more enlightened position, which only seemed to confirm how I felt about it. What I saw in the scriptures was something quite different to my experience. Then people put books in my hands that expressed the same view, so that made me think even more I was onto something.

From there it was around 2008 I was led to write a pamphlet about it, even before I began writing books. After which came a very strong confirmation I was hearing God correctly, and further strong confirmations over the years that followed. From there I did nothing more with those ideas until 2018 when God led me to write something autobiographical about my time in the mining industry, after which God said to me -

that was just writing practice, I now want you to write the book on church. So I did.

It wasn't an easy book to write, I must say. And the end result only seemed like a draft to me. But later God spoke to me about it and said – *This book will advance, but it will only ever be a draft.* The reason is because beyond this it can only be learned by doing it, for the simple reason that it must be led by the Spirit and so it must be dynamic rather than working to any fixed template. That said, there are important fundamentals so I believe what this book offers is the starting place, and that is its purpose.

From there came the biggest confirmation of my life, because once I'd written it I said to God – *How will you authenticate this book?* He then gave me the 2020 book to write as its authentication, which essentially prophesied what turned out to be the pandemic of 2020, the year before it happened – and this was when no other prophet seemed to be saying those things. Quite the opposite.

What I know prophetically about this book on church is first that it's time will come. And second that I will be around to see it and be satisfied with it in my lifetime. Maybe there are new drafts of the book to come before then. I am thinking and praying about that. But I expect when its time comes God will make it abundantly clear to us.

The only thing I would add is that I have come across a number of books by trusted prophets that are basically saying

the same or similar things about church, as many seem to know the modern church falls short, so it will come for sure. What it takes is for some that are hungry for God to realise that this is where the real blessing is. Certainly some of the message in the book about advancing technology has already come to pass, so maybe we are in fact already at the beginning of that revolution. I have no doubt this book is prophetic and its message is a **BIG DEAL** for the **KINGDOM OF GOD** so we can be sure that God will have his way in the end.

Here is the actual synopsis of the book as it now is:

Explores the original principles of the New Testament church after the Spirit fell, offering the way forward for the Christian church to come as it returns to its original model, vision, and values.

This short book draws largely on a significant work of the author and missionary Alexander Rattray Hay in South America, and his book *The New Testament Order for Church and Missionary* (1947). An old-fashioned title but an advanced and prophetic message pointing the way to the future.

His work was based on the experience of taking the gospel to the mission field and discovering that though the gospel was powerful, the western forms of church were a total flop.

He therefore returned to the Bible to discover the true principles of the original church and then put this into practice to discover it was powerful and vibrant.

The church in Argentina where he was working has since seen revival on an unprecedented scale, leading us to stop and examine that key work and what it may hold for the church in our day.

Expect to be challenged as this focuses on what the church was originally and should still be. And be ready for all your modern concepts of church to be questioned in the light of this proven model.

APPENDIX 2 – Becoming a Christian

This is the appendix I mentioned in the preface that I added for the benefit of those that have little or no experience of prophecy, and for those that have no faith in these things.

If that is you then let me first welcome you. I am about to explain some things that may have escaped your life experience until this point, so I am hoping you will realise that this book is no work of fiction but is in fact based in realities that are firmer than anything you have yet encountered.

Prophecy, which is what you are about to read about in this book, is what we Christians call a gift of the Spirit – meaning a gift from the Spirit of God, which simply means it is from God.

This gift does not stand alone but it is one of a number of gifts that God gives to his people that are in constant use by many Christian believers out there who have discovered them. In fact the real gift that many have discovered is that of the indwelling of the Spirit of God himself by whom these things come, and the fact that he can fill our whole being with his presence, if we let him.

Those who have discovered this truth are living a whole new kind of life. You may never have heard it put this way before but that is the truth of what is going on under the radar in the lives of many people.

One thing the Bible says is that *'the sons of God are led by the Spirit of God'* (Read Romans chapter 8 in the Bible). People who have the Holy Spirit within them really are living a different kind of life – something Jesus called an *'abundant life'* or *'life in all of its fullness'*, and in fact to become a son as this describes does in fact depend of whether we have that experience of God.

At this point I hear two main questions coming up from many of you as you read this. One is – *How do I get this experience?* And the other is – *Is this really real?* Let me answer this last question first as that clearly needs to be resolved before you can contemplate the other.

As I said earlier, prophecy is just one gift of the Spirit. Another is healing, and another is miracles.

In about 2006 I began an adventure with these gifts on the streets of various cities in the UK. I already believed in them because I had read and believed what it said about it in the Bible, but this was where I actually began to do it in a significant way.

It began with me watching short leg bones lengthen and broken bones heal almost instantly as somebody prayed for them in the name of Jesus.

In fact the first such healing or miracle I saw myself through my own prayers was of knuckles regrow into the fingers of a man who had an accident with a circular saw seven

years earlier and he had severed his forefinger and middle finger, but the surgeons had stitched them back on.

The knuckles were destroyed so the fingers were useless, but during prayer for his healing I watched his fingers first change from white to red as his blood flow was restored, and then the knuckles grew back into his fingers and he began to bend them, which would have been impossible because his tendons had been severed.

In truth one of his fingers remained stiff even though it had straightened and blood flow was restored, but that is the kind of mystery we learned we sometimes encounter, which is something I won't get into here. My point is, this is another gift of the Spirit which in this case is convincing as it involves actual physical bone growth, and since then I have seen all manner of physical conditions healed, often instantly.

Healings and miracles of this kind have been verified by doctors, and nowadays there are many examples of it actually filmed and released on YouTube.

Is the gift of healing real? – I offer you an emphatic yes and I can't think of what better evidence to offer you of this than solid bone growth.

In the same way, prophecy is also just as real. In fact the Bible suggests it is the greatest of the gifts, even above healing and miracles.

If you need more proof than my word on this then you have to dig it out for yourself. The experience is there to be had if you look for it.

As many Christians know, prophecy does not always foretell the future as some think. In fact prophecy can be simply defined as God speaking through his people. Often it simply takes the form of encouragement, which should not be surprising because God is an amazing parent who cares for us with everything we need to live and thrive.

Sometimes, however, prophecy does point the way to the future, and this is certainly the case in many of the Bible prophecies, but it also happens frequently in the use of the gift among believers who have God's Spirit within them.

That brings me to the first question I believe many of you who read this book will be asking – *How do I get this experience of God's Spirit within?*

Do you have to become 'religious'? – No.

Do you have to begin to live a good life? – No, because you can't. All you can do is submit yourself to God to make you good. Becoming good by yourself is more of an impossibility for you than you may realise because the real problem we all have is more of the heart than the behaviour.

Those things we do that show we are beings with a real problem stem from the heart so it is the heart that must be changed for real goodness to begin to emerge – and this is true for every one of us.

Outward behaviour does not solve that problem. It has to be dealt with within, and that is not something you can do for yourself – it requires another miracle, but one that many experience every single day in our age.

In short the reality is – God must do it, but he will only do that when you invite it because he doesn't simply muscle in on our lives and force himself upon us without our consent.

He gave you sovereign free will over your own life so you get to decide what happens with it. Therefore this must be a choice that you make for it to happen.

Is God willing to do it for you? Emphatically YES! In truth he is longing for you to make that kind of surrender. He loves you. You are his creature. But like all others you are broken and need to be fixed.

As the one who made you he knows how to do it and he has put everything in place, which was quite a costly thing I might add. If you look at what Jesus suffered on the cross to make it possible you will realise that is the measure of just how much God does love you and just how far he is prepared to go to restore you to what he made you to be.

God has done his part, but now you must do yours, and it is done by turning to God and inviting him to come in – though one thing I must add – this must be a wholehearted decision for you. It must be a decision to give your whole life to him so you too can be led by the Spirit of God.

For me, as one who has been living that life for more than 47 years now I can tell you it is an exciting thing – life in all its fullness. But it is also at times extremely challenging because God goes to work on us to transform us completely – how we think, how we live, what we love, what we enjoy, what we do.

As I said, he is your maker and he knows what you were made for. All that will be recovered if you choose to walk this path, but you must be ready to leave your old life behind because this one will be entirely new.

Those old problems you have may not instantly disappear, but you must set yourself against the things you know are wrong. That is what we call repentance, and it is an important choice to make.

God is the one that is committed to do that work in you and it will be a lifelong experience where he works on one thing after another, with the promise of eternal life hereafter.

For myself, I wouldn't have it any other way. His ideas are always so much better than mine. The greatest thing about this is what you will enter into is not 'religion', but a personal relationship with God, and that is the most valuable thing in the world. Like an unbreakable marriage, he promises never to leave you or forsake you, and with God he never breaks his promises.

You may need a little time to think this over, but if you decide to go ahead then what you need to do is simply but sincerely pray a prayer like this, and mean what it says. If you are ready to do that then this is all it takes. Here goes:

Prayer...

Dear God, I realise I have been living my own life until now, but now I want to surrender my life to you so I can live the life you are offering me. I here and now turn away from all that I know is wrong and ask you to forgive me for my sin. Thank you for what Jesus did for me on the cross. Please come into my heart today. I give my life to you. Please give me your Holy Spirit and come and live in me. Make me your child today, right now I ask. Thank you for your promise to save me. I now commit my life to you. Amen.