

Grace Upon Grace I

Fred R. Coulter—May 19, 2012

When God created us He created us in His likeness and after His image, so we could do things greater than anything else that He had created on the earth. Don't you think God is most generous in telling Adam and Eve that 'you have dominion over the earth, over the animals, over the birds, over every living thing'?

It's real interesting when you read the book of Job because it carries some things relating clear back to Gen. 1. God formed Adam and Eve—first Adam out of the dust of the earth; then Eve from one of his ribs. He placed within them all the various kinds of human beings that we can observe today. Paul wrote that God has made us all of one blood. Let's carry this through from Adam and Eve. Remember how Elihu confronted Job. What was one of the first things he said? He said, 'There's a spirit in man and the Spirit of God has formed me.'

Then he also said a little later, 'The hand of the Almighty has fashioned me.' I want you to think about that for a minute. Do we all have genes and chromosomes that God made, to put in Adam and Eve? If you think of each conception without a full-lived life, the history of mankind would be very short indeed—correct?

But if God made the original genes and chromosomes—which He did—and if God created the means of procreation—which He did—and if God makes every individual different by the combination of the genes and chromosomes of mother and father—which He has—then the hand of God when He formed Adam and Eve *made us*. And made us for a great and tremendous purpose.

But because God also gave free moral agency and choice—and He never takes that away, that is something that we are responsible for exercising—therefore, they sinned. When that sin came, God had to bring judgment upon them, the environment was changed, the nature of animals was changed, and the nature of man and woman was changed with 'the law of sin and death,' which we all inherit.

If we were confronted with that just on a human level, we would think that we would have been defeated. But God had a plan to rescue human kind. He had that plan all thought out and ready to go from the foundation of the world so that He could redeem mankind.

What He had to do was quite fantastic. I want you to think about grace in a broader term. But let's first read some Scriptures here in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. We need to

understand how God and Christ and us and grace all come together. To be a Christian doesn't mean just a profession of a set of standards or principles, like I recently gave on Church at Home. I gave a short series, *What Kind of Christian Are You?* Since that time we can develop it even more.

God did something fantastic; God wants us to know that it's not just a thing of an ordinary man. It's just not something that one person could die for another person. He wants us to know what God Himself has personally done.

John 1:1: "In *the* beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in *the* beginning with God" (vs 1-2).

Who was He? *He was in the beginning with God and so we can just say here these two Scriptures are the beginning of what we know that there are two in the God Family:* one who became the Father, one who became the Son. What about the Word? He was no ordinary human being when He was made flesh, that we'll see in a minute. Here's what happened.

Verse 3: "All things came into being through Him, and not even one *thing* that was created came into being without Him.... [Every living thing. That's why it can be said of all of us that the Spirit of God made us, but His hand formed us.] ...In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness does not comprehend it" (vs 3-5). Let's see what God did, and this shows us

- how absolutely humble God is and Christ is;
- how much the Father is willing to give up in order to save mankind
- how much the One Who created all human beings was willing to do to save us.

Because after all, we're born into the world—correct? Isn't that true? The first day of our birth we didn't look up at mom and dad and say, 'Give me the law of sin and death.' *No, we had no choice in it!* One day when we grow up we find the wages of sin is death.

What did God do? How is He going to solve this problem? We're talking about how many billions of people from the creation of the world until the end of God's plan as pictured by the Last Great Day.

Verse 14: "And the Word became flesh." He became a human being. There is a philosophical doctrine of Docetism, which means this: Jesus was

the man, who was in the flesh and Christ was the Spirit that possessed the man, so therefore, the Spirit possessing the man was impossible to sin. But that's not what the Bible teaches. He came in the flesh.

"...and tabernacled among us (and we ourselves beheld His glory, *the* glory as of *the* only begotten with *the* Father), full of grace and Truth" (v 14). You can read back in Luke 2:40, it says that He grew in grace and wisdom as a child. John picks up the writing after he talks about John the Baptist (v 15).

Verse 16: "And of **His fullness** we have all received..." What is the fullness? I'm sure that this is part of what John amplified in finalizing the Gospel of John, because he could look back and see of His fullness, everything that Christ did.

Verse 17: "For the Law was given through Moses, and the grace and the Truth came through Jesus Christ." That's interesting because before Christ came, before the Holy Spirit came, only certain selected ones received the Holy Spirit, certain ones of the patriarchs. And He said of the Israelites after giving the Ten Commandments, when they said, 'Everything that God says we will do.' He said, 'Oh, I wish there were such a heart in them that they would do it and keep My commandments always.'

Verse 16: "And of His fullness we have all received, and **grace upon grace**." What does that mean? *Grace upon grace!* Most people feel that if you repent of your sins you're forgiven by grace, it's all done, locked up and sealed and everything's finished. But what is *grace upon grace*?

Why is it that we keep the commandments, yet we're not under Law? Most people would say because Paul wrote, 'What? shall we sin because we're not under the Law but under grace?' They totally confuse it because they do not know what grace really is.

So, let's see if we can understand it today in the way that we need to. They all rely on the first act of grace that is pronounced here in the Bible. Even here the way that it is presented and should be translated in the Greek is reflected in the English.

Here's what God did, John 3:16: "**For God so loved the world...** [even though it's sinful; even though it's wretched] **...that He gave His only begotten Son...** [When it talks about the only begotten Son, that means that there was no other human being begotten directly by God the Father in the womb of any other woman than the one Who became Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary.] ...so that everyone who believes in Him..." That's interesting because this then is reflected in the Greek as meaning to believe and keep on believing, *believing, believing*.

"...**may not perish...** [It does not mean *shall not* or *should not*. Most translations have it *should not*, but *should* is too close to *shall*. This is *may not perish*, which shows that we have our choices. That's why we have to endure to the end. That's why we have to be faithful to the end.] **...but may have everlasting life**" (v 16). That is the total expression of God's grace in the action of Christ coming and dying.

- How does grace begin in your life?
- How do you receive *grace upon grace*, through Jesus Christ, through His sacrifice, through His Spirit?
- Why are you here?

Let's think about that from this point of view:

- How did you get here?
- What happened in your life?

We know the parable of the sower—right? Sowed the seed, some went on the stony place, some went on shallow soil, some went on weeds and thistles, some fell on good ground. So ask yourself:

- Why me?
- What was it that God did?
- Did you read in the Bible that says, 'If you keep this law, you'll find God?' *No!*
- If you keep this law, you'll receive eternal life?
- What was the first grace that God gave to you and you perhaps didn't even know it?

That was the day in your life and in your trouble and in the things that you were living separated from God—you can all remember the day that it happened—something happened in your mind and you wanted to find out about God.

The first grace that came to you was that God recognized that you wanted that. God has seven Spirits, which are the seven eyes of God that go through the whole earth. It talks about the eyes of God gaze upon men. It talks about that God knows the hearts of all men and women. He doesn't have it in His mind all the time, but He can know them.

God responded to you. You may have even cried out. I remember when I first thought about God. I was out walking at night. I had quite a few problems and difficulties in my life and I was pretty miserable. I was living in Burlingame at the time, Northern California, and they get a lot of fog in San Francisco, foggy everyday.

It's about nine o'clock at night and I'm walking down the sidewalk and I guess it was my first prayer. I looked up between the parting fog and I saw a couple of stars up there and I said, 'God, if You're there, help me.' *And He did!* There are a couple of other things I could add to it, but that was

the moment. I don't know what moment it was with you, but what did God do?

Here's what He did. This is why it is grace. Everything about your life as a Christian is based upon grace and it's *grace upon grace!* Here is the first instance of grace and why is it called grace?

- Did God send a minister? *No!*
- Did God send a priest? *No!!*
- Did God send an angel? *No!!*
- What did God do?

This will help us understand the importance of our relationship with God, will help us understand what it means that God so loves us and Jesus loves us. All of that is an act of grace.

But here is the first thing that God did, John 6:44: "**No one can come to Me unless the Father, Who sent Me, draws him...**" God the Father personally intervened in your life. God the Father is the great Sovereign of the universe. Think on that!

What did He do? *He drew you!* How did He do that? *Probably one of the seven Spirits*—which I don't know how vast or active that their realm is, but they're certainly busy. The message came back to God: this person is seeking after You.

- How did God respond? ***God Himself began to draw you!***
- When was the day when you started hungering and thirsting after the Truth of God?
- When was the day that you became so excited about the Truth of God and God's plan that you just couldn't put it down?
- When was the day that you were moved to absolute tears and in some cases just abject bawling and begging for forgiveness?
- ***That's when God started drawing you!***

The reason that He did that was so that you could start coming to Him. As long as we keep seeking God and believing God and coming to Him, what does God do?

We're going to see there's another part of the equation that goes with this, because God the Father and Jesus Christ jointly do this. I want you now to understand something very important: This is why to join a church is worthless, because God wants to deal with you personally. This is hard to grasp. This is very overwhelming. This reflects the love of God to you.

Let's see what Jesus said to Thomas, John 14:6: "Jesus answered to him, '**I am the Way...** [You start hungering and thirsting for *the way of God.*] **...and the Truth...**" You came to the point that you didn't want to hear anything but the Truth. All of these things are part of *grace upon grace*

upon grace. Like Winston Churchill said, 'People come along and they trip over the truth, get up off the ground and dust themselves off and go on and forget it. God's Spirit is drawing you and bringing you to Him—the Father Himself. I want you to grasp it's the Father Himself.

"...and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me" (v 6). It is by joint agreement of God the Father and Jesus Christ that you now have access to God, which then is grace. Remember when Jesus told them to pray? What are the first words you pray? Our Father Who is in heaven. No saint, because they aren't there.

When that happens, something else begins to take place, because this is a spiritual thing in your life, in your mind. You may be so excited you run up and tell someone about it and they look at you with it. 'Really!' The Spirit of Truth will reveal it to you and then you find out Halloween is not of God! You find out that's a lie. You find out Sunday is a lie. You find out Christmas is a lie and you're taught to lie to your children, which is a 'good thing,' like my mother told me that's a 'white lie.' I said, 'Well, I get switched for that.'

You run up and tell someone something about it. I remember when just before I was baptized—I worked in a restaurant. Sometimes I would work two shifts, eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. How's that for resting! My boss could always depend on me. If someone didn't show up, I would show up.

So, one Thursday night or Wednesday night I came up to my boss and I said, 'I can't work anymore from Friday night sundown to Saturday night sundown.' He looked at me and said why? He's thinking in his mind here's this guy who would any shift at anytime—morning, swing, or graveyard. And I said, 'Because of my religion.'

His face dropped and his chin almost fell on the top of his shoes and he said, 'When did you become religious?' So, I said, 'Okay, if you can't give me the time off you have my two-week's notice. 'Wait a minute, let me go back and look at the schedule and see what I could do.' He came back and said he couldn't do it. I said, 'Would you mind if I looked at the schedule?' I went back and looked at the schedule and I knew the chef—the chef would work from eight in the morning to four in the afternoon.

On Friday I didn't have to go to school so I said, 'How about if I come in for the chef?' The chef was happy because he had to do all the prep in the restaurant for Saturday, so he could have Friday off, what a good deal. Then I looked over at the graveyard schedule that started at one o'clock Sunday morning. That was a killer graveyard, 1-9

a.m. was really bad. So, I did that and my official day off was Tuesday, but I had the Sabbath. As you grow and study and pray, you begin to learn things and what happens?

Matthew 11:25: “At that time Jesus answered and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for it was well pleasing in Your sight *to do* this. All things were delivered to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom **the Son personally chooses** to reveal *Him*’” (vs 25-27).

- You have the Father drawing you, *that’s grace!*
- You having Christ approving of that, *that’s grace!*
- You have Christ now revealing the Father to you, *that’s grace!*
- You can pray to the Father in heaven above, *that’s grace!*

Grace upon grace!

Let’s go on because this gets better. Let’s understand that in order to be put into right standing with God you have to have your sins forgiven and this is accomplished through baptism. Baptism is also an act of grace—is it not? *Christ died!* He gave His life to end the covenant with Israel and begin the covenant with the Church, so He died.

In order to enter into a covenant you have something you need to bring as a sacrifice as well. *That sacrifice is you living and then being buried in the watery grave.* How do we have our sins forgiven? Remember, just like the principle: a little leavens the whole lump. If you have ‘the law of sin and death’ in you, it does not matter if you haven’t committed some heinous crime, you still have ‘the law of sin and death’ within you.

It’s like one man pointed out one time. William Tyndale said, ‘All baby rattlesnakes are born with the capacity of venom and killing. It’s their very nature.’ But yet, when they’re born they look like little innocent things; same way with pythons. A lot of people said, ‘Oh, look at these pythons. Aren’t these very interesting things.’ Until they grew till be 12 feet. ‘Now what am I going to do with it in my house. I’ll throw it out in the swamp.’ Now they’ve got a plague of pythons in Florida that won’t quit.

With all of us having *the law of sin and death*, if you’ve hated you’ve murdered. If you’ve thought evil things, you’ve been evil. God is dealing with the mind, He’s not dealing with just the

outward thing. The law only deals with the outward thing.

Young teenagers go out on a date all alone and mothers instruct their daughters, ‘Now, you be careful. You’ve got to guard yourself.’ Like one father told his daughter, he said, ‘Pants up, skirt down, legs crossed.’ Because you all know, and I’m not telling any secret to anyone, that the minute you got out of the sight of your parents alone with either your girlfriend or your boyfriend or your friends or the group together, you always did things that your parents never knew anything about. And furthermore, they told you not to do them—right? *Yes! The law of sin and death!*

So, dealing with fornication in the letter of the Law if you really don’t do it, you didn’t do it. But all the things leading up to do it, you could do it, and you still didn’t do it. Now in the spirit of law, Christ came and said, ‘The one who lusts after a woman has committed adultery already in his heart.’ Now God is dealing with the mind. Now God is dealing with the Spirit. He’s not dealing with just the Law. We look and see that sin to us becomes exceedingly sinful. What does God do? We begin to think about God. God sends His Spirit to draw us.

- we begin *following*
- we begin *learning*
- we begin *knowing*

All of this is *grace upon grace upon grace!*

He brings us to the point of conviction of sin. Then He brings us to the point that we know we need to be baptized. Why do you repent? Why could you have done that same act in the past and think nothing of it and really think that was pretty good, but now because God has intervened in your life you know it’s exceedingly sinful. What happened? *Another grace!*

Romans 2:4: “Or do you despise the riches of His kindness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that **the graciousness of God leads you to repentance?**” To where you cry out to God, ‘Forgive my sins.’ Where then you look and see where it says, ‘If you seek God, you have to forsake your way. You have to forsake your thoughts.’ Because God’s ‘thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways.’ This is a complete turning upside down of your former life—is it not? *That’s what repentance is all about!*

God is responding to you in grace. It is the Father Who is doing it. God the Father and Jesus Christ are the Ones Who are doing it. There are no angels in between. This is what I want you to understand about grace. This is the only thing, brethren, that’s going to help straighten out the Churches of God, that they understand *God the*

Father and Jesus Christ are directly involved with the Spirit of God in the life of everyone that He calls. They belong to Him and we are only stewards of God's property to increase God's investment.

God leads you with His grace to repentance. How does He forgive your sins? He does it this way. He justifies you. Romans 3:23: "**For all have sinned...**"—because we all have *the law of sin and death!* How many times does a scandal erupt with someone who is thought to be a stalwart upright person in the community or in the Church or in business? *All have sinned!*

What happens when your little kid runs to the store and comes home with stolen candy in his pocket? Verse 23: "...all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (v 23). All human beings are condemned. That's a terrible state to be in—isn't it?

The Catholics say you can buy your way out, send more money to the pope. The Muslims say put out a suicide bomb and you'll be greeted with 72 virgins. *Christ paid for the sins of all mankind, as the Creator because He gave all human beings 'the law of sin and death'!* Only He can undo it because He did it! So as a righteous God, He took upon Himself, which is grace—right? Doesn't it say that by the grace of God Christ tastes death for every man? *Yes, it does!* (Heb. 2).

Isn't it grace to say, 'Father, I will die for them; I will become a human being; I will give up My glory; I will divest Myself; I will put Myself into Your hands and I will go as a human being, because that's why We made mankind in Our image and after Our likeness. I will take upon Myself 'the law of sin and death,' just like I gave to all My creation. With Your Spirit and with Your help I will not sin—by choice—and I will overcome Satan the devil. We will, with Our plan, save all mankind.'

When you come to Christ to have your sins forgiven think how great that was! I don't know what thing you could compare on earth with a human analogy to compare with that. You can't because this is *grace upon grace*.

His life was full of grace and Truth. He was filled with the Holy Spirit of God. He said, 'Of Myself'—and the Greek is 'ek'—*out from within Me I can do nothing*. The work He was to do was Divine, though in the flesh. The work He was to do was to save mankind. Since He divested Himself of His glory and committed Himself to God the Father, He taught what the Father taught Him, He said the things that He instructed Him to do, and He willingly laid down His life. Jesus said, 'I lay My life down for the sheep. No one takes it from Me. I have authority to receive it back.' That's something! All of that's grace.

Every time we go to God and we say, 'Our Father in heaven'—as I pointed out recently your prayers go right up to God the Father, directly. Have you been begotten by God the Father in the Spirit of your mind? *Yes!* You have the Spirit of God. *That's grace!* Does God hear and answer your prayers? *Yes, that's grace!*

Our whole relationship with God is with God, not with a 'religion' and because of that He demands that we keep His commandments at a spiritual level. That's why we have the series *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*. I want you to understand. God loves you. Christ loves you. They are dealing with you directly and that is the *grace of God*.

Verse 24: "But are being **justified** freely... [put in right standing with God] **...by His grace...** [*grace upon grace*] ...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." That's why we're here, brethren. Once we grasp this; once we understand this; once we live our lives this way; once we—as we can say in the human vernacular—'wrap our minds around this'—this is something we continually grow in—then we begin to understand. Then it talks about how we have been freely forgiven through His blood.

This is a unilateral operation by God the Father through Jesus Christ *to everyone who repents; to everyone who is called of God and responds!* Let's talk about the calling of God, because it says that 'many are called and few are chosen.' Why are few chosen? *Because few repent!*

The majority do not repent. Look at what is called the Christian world out there today. God's judgment is upon it and it's just absolutely plunging headlong down into the abyss. Remember the sermon that I gave when God gave me the idea concerning Church at Home nine years ago and it was when I was flying to the conference here and we had the conference in November and I was reading the book by Lloyd Geering, *Christianity Without God!* Do we have it today in the world? *Yes, we do!*

Now I'm reading a book by this woman, *Christianity After Religion* by Diana Butler Bass. I'll say no more but I'm going to give a sermon on it. Just to give you a clue: The Protestants are now believing that as men and women are now, God is in every human being today, *which is not true!* That sows the seed of a one-world religion that will be sown in every religion in the world, and we're all one big happy family under the antichrist.

With repentance, with our sins forgiven, what has God done? Let's back up and add a little bit more to it. We finally find out in the course of studies that Satan the devil is 'the god of this world' and he's 'deceived the whole world'—correct? Were you in the grips of Satan the devil at one time?

Satan has people who do good works over here and most of them work in government. Then he has those over there who are dedicated to evil and murder, drugs, killing and slaughtering. Then he has those over here who are dedicated to lying, cheating, stealing, and all of that sort of thing: ripping off banks and ripping off the investors.

He's got all of them deceived because all of the money in the world really isn't money. It's only a number, only a figure, only a debt. Do you know what the people of Iceland have done? *They fired the whole government!* They got rid of all the bankers. They renounced all their debt and they are starting again. All of this debt is artificially created.

Then look at 'religion.' Look at education. Look at sports. Look at this world. Finally you come to the understanding, yes, *Satan is deceiving the whole world!* You were in the grips of Satan and most of those who will be coming into the Church of God now and repentance that God will lead them, have been involved in many difficult and heinous sins. They'll be crying out for forgiveness. Only God can do this and it is the Father Himself Who does it through the sacrifice of Christ.

Colossians 1:9: "For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." This shows the magnitude of the growth that we are to come to.

That's why what we are studying is from God the Father and Jesus Christ. They are eternal Spirit beings. He's offering us eternal life. We are actually in the school of eternal life. That's what it's all about. To learn eternal life is going to fantastic. ***To live forever!***

It's kind of like this. A woman is pregnant and about the late eighth month, the beginning of the ninth month, if you put your ear down you can hear the baby swishing around. The baby can hear things. They can hear music, respond to it, so make sure you have good music if you're pregnant. They get all upset when they hear all of this jangled modern music.

What if the father put his hands right on the mother's belly and said, 'Hello, little daughter, I love you.' She could probably hear the sound, but would she understand anything? *Of course not!* That's kind of the way we are until the resurrection—right? What is it going to be like to be a spirit being? But we have to remember from whence we came.

Verse 10: "That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God;

being strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father, Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (vs 10-12). Brethren, I can tell you what that will be, but we don't have a clue as to the reality of it and it is this. *We are going to inherit the universe!* Think on that!

The next time you watch these beautiful pictures that the Hubbell telescope has done, and I'm sure that God gave that technology to glorify Himself and give a witness to this God-defying world that there is a Creator God Who has made all of this. We didn't come from slime and all you evolutionists out there *go get your own dirt* and your own big bang. Stop getting mad at me. The Father qualifies us.

- this is why you're here
- this is why the Father has to draw
- this is why it has to be through Jesus Christ
- this is why it is a spiritual operation through grace
- this is why it is from the Father because it is the benefit directly from the Father to you, everyone of us

Verse 13: "Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness..." Who is the prince of darkness who has power over this world? *Satan the devil!* The only One Who can release you from that is God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

"...and has transferred *us* unto... [Not *into* because the Kingdom of God is not here and flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, but we are now under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of God through God the Father and Jesus Christ.] ...unto the kingdom of the Son of His love" (v 13).

I want to leave you with this: *That's why the Church is the **body of baptized believers!*** Any corporate thing only has to do with the necessity of conducting business in this world. A corporate church has no spiritual authority. The Holy Spirit of God has two aspects to it. You have the Holy Spirit of God *by receiving the begetting of the Holy Spirit from the Father at baptism!* It is the Father and Christ dwelling in you. *Yes, it is a down payment! Yes, it is a beginning!* But as we are going to see we have to 'grow in grace and knowledge.' It's directly from God the Father to each one of us individually.

*That's what it means **grace upon grace!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) John 1:1-4, 14, 16-17, 16
- 2) John 3:16
- 3) John 6:44
- 4) John 14:6

- 5) Matthew 11:25-27
- 6) Romans 2:4
- 7) Romans 3:23-24
- 8) Colossians 1:9-13

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 1
- Luke 2:40
- John 1:15
- Hebrews 2

Also referenced:

Sermon Series:

- *What Kind of Christian Are You?*
(ChurchatHome.org)
- *God's Grace and Commandment-Keeping*

Books:

- *Christianity Without God* by Lloyd Geering
- *Christianity After Religion* by Diana Butler Bass

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