God's Greatest Gift of Grace

Fred R. Coulter—September 15, 2003

Let's begin by going to Romans 4 and let's understand some very important and profound things. What God has done is really an absolutely tremendous thing that He has done for His people. Romans 4:16: "For this reason *it is* of faith..." Our standing with God is *through faith*. It has to be the very faith of Jesus Christ.

- the same faith that Jesus had in committing Himself to God the Father, to go through the whole ordeal of the crucifixion
- the same faith that Christ exercised to heal the sick and raise the dead
- the same faith that is a gift of the Holy Spirit that God gives to us.

We are to live our lives by the very faith of Jesus Christ. That's what Paul said in Gal. 2.

"...in order that it might be by grace... [It's God's grace: His favor, His gift, what He does unilaterally to everyone He calls.] ...to the end that the promise might be certain to all the seed—... [If you are Christ's, and Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.] ...not to the one who is of the law only, but also to the one who is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (exactly as it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.').... [At the resurrection, isn't he going to be surprised!] ...before God in Whom he believed, Who gives life to the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they are" (vs 16-17).

Whenever you get discouraged, remember this: Don't look at the circumstances where you are today. In faith, ask God to help you have the understanding that He is going to change those circumstances in the future and count everything that you go through—if you love God—that it's going to work out for good, *everything*; even though you're going through trouble right now, if you need to be; it's going to work out for good!

Verse 18: "And who against hope believed in hope... [Sometimes you get so desperate, so down and so low the only thing you can do is hope in hope; the only thing you can do is say, 'God, You promised!' Because you can't see your way out of it, and you can't see your way beyond it, so you have to commit it into God's hands.] ...in order that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, 'So shall your seed be.'"

He had to have a lot of faith, because at 99-years-old it's rather difficult, to say the least. But nevertheless, God did!

Verse 19: "And he, not being weak in the

faith, considered not his own body, already having become dead, being about one hundred years old, nor did he consider the deadness of Sarah's womb." That's why He did it this way, because God intended to show the world through Abraham—that through God's grace and God's faith—He is even able to do the impossible! If He chose someone young and strong and virile and beautiful, had a beautiful wife, all this sort of thing, hey, where's the miracle? There isn't any!

Verse 20: "And he did not doubt the promise of God through unbelief; rather, he was strengthened in the faith, giving glory to God." If you have a time when you are not believing as you ought to, give glory to God and ask Him to work it out. That's how you're strengthened in faith; you give glory to God!

Verse 21: "For he was fully persuaded that what He has promised, He is also able to do." Understand this, this is true: Every word that's in the Bible is a covenant and promise from God! When you claim those promises, ask God to bless you with His promises. He will do so, but also He will do it in His own time and in His own way so that it will have the greatest effect. God will do it.

Verse 22: "As a result, it was also imputed to him for **righteousness**." That's part of the gift that God gives you. This doesn't mean that this is a substitute for commandment-keeping. This righteousness is right standing with God, or you could phrase it another way, because the word is almost equivalent: "As a result it was also imputed to him for **justification**." In other words, he was justified before God *because he believed* and God imputed that to him. That's why you cannot appropriate Christ. That's the reverse.

If, like the Protestants say, 'appropriate Christ,' you're taking God to you. Who's calling whom? You're calling God! Well, then, where's God's calling? If you call God, Who is God? You or God? They've got it all backwards. God is the One Who imputes! God is the One Who gives!

Verse 23: "But it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; rather, it was also written for our sakes, to whom it shall be imputed—to those who believe in Him Who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead... [that's believing in the Father Who raised Jesus from the dead] ... Who was delivered for our offenses and was raised for our justification" (vs 23-25). There's the key! He had to be raised to appear before the Father, for our justification, that is to be in right standing with God the Father in heaven above.

That's the whole key! That's the whole reason why God has called us! Remember that! Never, *ever*, *ever* get discouraged any longer than it takes you to get on your knees and pray to God! You might be clear down in the depths; you might be walking through the shadow of your own 'valley of death.' We all have to face that, every one of us! But nevertheless, you will be delivered. God promises so! He develops it from here. Once you have been put in right standing with God, have been justified by the sacrifice of Christ and His blood and righteousness imputed to you as a gift of God:

Romans 5:1: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand..." (vs 1-2). Living in grace is like living under the umbrella of God's love, from which comes grace, blessing, peace, faith, hope and all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. You stand under that, and these come from God to you through Christ.

"...and we ourselves boast in *the* hope of the glory of God.... [No us, not our physical things, not our goods, but]: ...in *the* hope of the glory of God" (v 2). When you're at your lowest, think about when we are old and weak and ready to die—I don't know how may of us are going to reach that stage before Christ returns or not; but when you reach that stage—or are getting close to that stage—you know in your own heart how corruptible the flesh is; how weak the flesh is.

Don't get discouraged, because God is looking beyond. He's called you in the hope of the resurrection—correct? The hope of the resurrection is that you will have a new body, a new mind, and you will be a new being! If this old 'corpus nephesh' deteriorates, you do the best you can to keep in the best shape you can as long as you can, but one day it's going to go sayonara. God intended it. It says, 'Blessed is the death of a saint in the eyes of God.' Why? Because all those who die in faith have made it! Is that not God's purpose and goal? Yes, it is! God refers to this death as sleep.

Verse 3: "And not only *this*, but we also boast in tribulations... [that takes a good deal of getting use to; Paul went through many] ...realizing that tribulation brings forth endurance." What did Jesus say in Matt. 24? *The one who endures to the end, the same shall be saved!* You have to have endurance. How many people have not had endurance? It's more than just patience. It could be translated *patience* or *endurance*, but endurance is the more profound translation.

Verse 4: "And endurance *brings forth* character, and character *brings forth* hope. And the hope *of God* never makes us ashamed because the love

of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us" (vs 4-5). That's the operation of how God's grace comes to us. Notice that as a gift of God it comes with:

- hope
- faith
- trials
- endurance
- character
- the love of God

This is why Christ came to reveal the Father.

Let's see that it was Jesus' job to reveal the Father. The reason that He wanted to reveal the Father was because *God the Father is actively involved in our lives*, as well as Jesus Christ. You're going to see that the revelation of the Father proceeds through the Gospel of John and then much of it is later picked up by the Apostle Paul and carried forward even more. I was just overwhelmed when I went through and did the study, and I found out it was 117 times in the Gospel of John and ten times in the Epistle of First John that it mentions the Father. Then compared to the other Gospels, it was really very overwhelming.

John 12:35: "Then Jesus said to them, 'Yet a little while the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, so that *the* darkness will not overtake you...." This can happen in many different ways. We can say today that there's still peace in the land. While you can still study, while you still can pray, while you still have freedom be zealous for God and make the best that you can of it. The day is going to come when the 'darkness' is going to come and overtake the whole world.

This is what happens to those who do not do that, if they stand in one place or go backward, they are receding from the light. Right at first they don't understand that they are leaving the light. Just like if you got in front of a car with the headlights on, and you started walking toward the headlights, you could still see the light. Then you didn't quite make it all the way to the car because you turned around and you started going the other way. The lights were still shinning—weren't they? It's kind of self-deceptive because you think you're in the light, but your back is to the light. You start walking away and just like it is when it's dark, right at first if there's a little light you can see really good—right? But sooner or later you get far enough away and it's all darkness again. That's why He said, 'While you have the light, walk in the light.'

"...For the one who walks in darkness does not know where he is going" (v 35). If you know some who have left the light to go back to darkness, ask them:

- Where are you going?
- What are you doing?
- What are you learning?
- Where is God?

I think you will find that they don't know!

Verse 36: "While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become *the* children of light.' Jesus spoke these things and *then* departed from them *and* was *in* hiding. Although He had done so many miracles in their presence, they did not believe in Him" (vs 36-37). Isn't that amazing? Isn't that just like the children of Israel coming out of Egypt after seeing all the signs and wonders and miracles? By the time they got out there and their feet were sore and their mouths were dry the heat was hot, and they said, 'What did you bring us out here for? Who can give us food? Who can give us water?

Verse 38: "So that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled who said, 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of *the* Lord been revealed?' For this *very* reason they could not believe because again Isaiah said, 'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts so that they would not see with *their* eyes and understand with *their* hearts, and be converted, and I would heal them'" (vs 38-40). Many people read that and think:

- Why would God want to do that?
- Doesn't He was as many saved as He can get saved?
- Isn't that what the Protestants say?
- 'Ya'all come give your heart to the Lord, come down to the altar here tonight, because it may be too late if you don't do it and you go home. You may not get home.'

Here he says that He blinds their eyes and hardens their hearts so they can't see, understand and be converted, and He won't heal them spiritually. What kind of savior is that? *God's plan is greater!* You have to come to the Last Great Day to find out why. The long and short of it is that He has yet to have mercy on them.

Who comes to God? The one that God the Father draws—right? He's got to have some to be first—doesn't He? He's got to have the first resurrection in order to do the rest of His plan—does He not? Think of it this way: Those He has called, you're part of that plan! You're part of the solution! You're part of what God is working out! That's something!

Verse 42: "But even so, many among the rulers believed in Him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, so that they would not be

put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God" (vs 42-43).

- You always got your politicians in there—don't you?
- You always have your people-pleasers in there—don't you?
- You always have those who put people before God!

They would rather go fellowship where it's niceynice and learn nothing about God, because the people are their God. That's called a 'social religion.' But the truth is, unless you have a right relationship with God—during the Sabbath and during your life before you go to Sabbath services—then you deserve the social fellowship, because that's your god! Sooner or later it's going to come to an end.

Joe Jr. [Tkach of Worldwide Church of God] just gave the edict: Sunday or else! All their socializing didn't do them any good—did it? Did it preserve the Sabbath? *No!* Were they weakened in faith because they didn't stand firm? *Yes!* Do they have enough strength to stand now? *We'll see!* Just like Job said, 'What I have greatly feared has come upon me.' Now the hour of decision is at hand! Do you love God? *or* Do you love men? There have always been those; that's what Jesus said here. Then Jesus made it clear, and this is the whole key point. This is what keyed this with me in reading Karlstadt—this verse right here:

Verse 44: "Then Jesus called out and said, 'The one who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him Who sent Me." Christ opens the way to the Father! Opening the way to the Father, through Christ, is the greatest grace that God can give. We'll explain this as we go along. I want you to go back and think of how many times you have heard it said, 'Pray three times a day, and you have to pray by the clock'? The truth is, if it isn't from the heart, I don't care if you're surrounded in a clock shop. If it isn't from the heart, then what are you doing? What is it? That's why it has to be to God the Father. That's why He's given you this greatest grace. It's to all those He has called.

I tell you what, if this doesn't excite you and open your mind and your understanding, I don't know what will. We need to grasp that if you believe not on Jesus only, "...The one who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him Who sent Me." Not just in Christ! Now you're going to begin to see that the Protestants are also halfway-beeners. They haven't come to the Father, and the Father hasn't brought them.

Verse 45: "And the one who sees Me sees Him Who sent Me.... [What does the Father look

like? Just like Jesus!] ...I have come as a light into the world so that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. But if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world" (vs 45-47). All of this shows our choices involved in it. That's why the Word of God is so important. It's not the one who is preaching that's important. It's what God is inspiring to be taught that is important. It's not how the speaker speaks that's important. It's does he speak the words of God—that's important!

Verse 48: "The one who rejects Me and does not receive My words has one who judges him; the word which I have spoken, that shall judge him in the last day.... [Here's why: How was Jesus taught? Of God the Father!] ...For I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father, Who sent Me, gave Me commandment Himself... [God Himself personally gave it to Christ] ...what I should say and what I should speak" (vs 48-49). Now we're getting into understanding the Father even more—right? Have you noticed this?

- What is one of the first things that apostatizing Christians start to do?
- What is one of the first things they drop off? *Foot-washing!*
- What's next? Unleavened bread!
- What's next? Holy Days!
- What's next? Sabbath-keeping!

A 'little leaven leavens the whole lump!' The way the Greek is here makes it far more imperative upon us with foot-washing:

Romans 13:13: "You call Me the Teacher and the Lord, and you speak rightly, because I am. Therefore, if I, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, **you also are duty-bound** to wash one another's feet" (vs 13-14). That's much stronger and that's what the Greek means, instead of 'you ought' (KJV) to wash one another's feet. In English today the word 'ought' does not have the binding quality of 'duty-bound.' Today the word 'ought' is almost optional. 'You ought to be here at 8 o'clock.' That doesn't sound mandatory that I absolutely need to be. That's why 'duty-bound' is much better.

Verse 15: "For I have given you an example, to show that you also should do exactly as I have done to you. Truly, truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, nor a messenger greater than he who sent him.... [Always true—isn't it? Yes, indeed!] ...If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (vs 15-17).

How many blessings do people deprive themselves of when they stop foot-washing? When they stop keeping the Passover? Satan's going to be there and make them feel good, then they justify what they're doing in their own mind—right?

- when they give up unleavened bread
- when they give up on the Holy Days
- when they give up on the Sabbath
- when they don't believe in tithing and offering
- when they don't believe that they ought to live by every Word of God

So, they cut themselves off from all these blessings!

John 14—we'll spend a little time here, because this is a key, pivotal chapter. Again, He's revealing the Father all the way through. Notice that this was done on the Passover night—correct? What is the key to knowing and understanding the Father? What is the key to receiving this grace? *The Passover!* I mention about the *simplicity in Christ*—correct? It's simple! "…blessed are you if you do them." It's that simple!

John 14:1: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were otherwise, I would have told you. I am going to **prepare a place** for you" (vs 1-2). What is Jesus preparing for me? A place in New Jerusalem! I wonder what that's going to be like? He's also preparing you for eternal life and to share in His glory!

The reason why God's greatest grace is to reveal the Father to you and you have a relationship between you and the Father through Christ is because that's a foretaste of when you are going to live with God forever and see Him face-to-face. God has called us to a fantastic calling. This is big time stuff, brethren! That's why the world hates us, because the puny substitute that they have is just worthless compared to what God has for us.

Now then, He gives a guarantee, v 3: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again..." Is Christ coming again? Absolutely! When is He going to come? Right on time! God the Father's time and no man's time! You will understand. It's going to shake the heavens; it's going to shake the earth; it's going to shake the sea and everything. There is going to be no doubt! It isn't going to be the secret little something to askance you up and take you out of the Tribulation. It's going to come as a BLAST from heaven! God has called us to the greatest calling—you talk about big league! What God has called us to puts into total insignificance anything else.

"...and receive you to Myself; so that where I am, you may be also. And where I am going you know, and the way you know" (vs 3-4). They didn't quite understand that. Especially Thomas, he had a

hard time understanding that it was really Christ Who showed up. Remember what he said? If I see His hands and His side, then I'll believe!' When Christ appeared eight days later, He said, 'Thomas, come here.'

Verse 5: "Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going; how then can we know the way?'.... [Again, He made it simple. You have to do it.] ...Jesus said to him, 'I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Me'" (vs 5-6). There we see the joint calling of God the Father drawing, but you have to come through Christ.

Notice that it is not a way. It is not a truth. It is not a life. It is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and it is exclusive! It is either God's way or no way! It's not going to be 'half my way, Lord, and half Your way; let's share this.' Are you God? Of course not!

Verse 7: "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. But from this time forward, you know Him and have seen Him.' Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and that will be sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long a time, and you have not known Me, Philip? The one who has seen Me has seen the Father; why then do you say, "Show us the Father"?" (vs 7-9). Christ is the One Who opens the way and opens the door.

Verse 10: "Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I speak to you, I do not speak from My own self; but the Father Himself, Who dwells in Me, does the works." Same way with us: with God's Spirit, whatever we do, it is God the Father and Jesus Christ *in us*.

I tell you what, when you really grasp this and you really understand this, this is going to help you overcome sin more than anything else, because you're going to have that direct relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ

- Who takes away sin
- Who gives you grace
- Who forgives your sins
- Who puts you in right standing with Him

What can be against that? *Nothing!* Isn't that greater than listing out your sins and say, 'I've got to work on them'? What you need is a conversion—a change of mind, a change of heart—and that will solve the sin problem—won't it? Not entirely, because we still have the 'law of sin and death' in us. But it will give us the hope, the spirit, the life, the zeal and the desire. That's what belief and hope is all about.

Verse 11: "Believe Me that I am in the

Father and the Father is in Me; but if not, believe Me because of the works themselves. Truly, truly I say to you, the one who believes in Me shall also do the works that I do; and greater works than these shall he do because I am going to the Father" (vs 11-12). All you have to do is read what the apostles did. They did great works! They did greater works!

Verse 13: "And whatever you shall ask in My name... [With this kind of attitude and spirit you're not going to ask out of lust or covetousness; greed or envy. You're going to ask out of sincere desire.] (v 14): ...If you ask anything in My name, I will do *it*." If you 'love Me keep the commandments—namely Mine.'

Verse 23: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word... [Paul says to 'imitate God.' Be imitators of God! That's a pretty high standard—isn't it? Yes, indeed!] ...and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him" You become a temple of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit has two parts:

- 1. the begettal of the Father and direct access to Him
- 2. the mind of Christ

That's why it's called the Spirit of the Father where we call 'Abba, Father'; and it's called the Spirit of Christ. 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' It's combined! Both are doing the work.

Verse 24: "The one who does not love Me does not keep My words..." Nothing clearer than that—right? 'What do you think about the Sabbath?' *I don't think we need to keep it!* 'You don't love God.' *Yes, I do, I go to church on Sunday!* Do you see how incongruous that is? It doesn't work! If you love God you'll do everything that He says—right? *Yes!* Just like praying for your enemies.

"...and the Word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father's, Who sent Me" (v 24). People with their opinions and think that they have a right to choose—which they do. But they don't realize what they're doing when they reject God—do they? They think that they're rejecting a church, or think that they're rejecting a preacher. They don't understand that they're rejecting the Sovereign of the universe God the Father! That's big time stuff—isn't it? Yes, indeed! Then He talks about sending the Holy Spirit.

(go to the next track)

Verse 30: "I will not speak with you much longer because the ruler of this world is coming; but he does not have a single thing in Me. Yet, *he comes* so that the world may know that I love the Father, and that I do exactly as the Father has commanded

Me. Arise, let us go out" (vs 30-31).

How many times did Jesus say that? If Jesus did everything the Father showed Him to do, commanded Him to do, and everything as the Father wanted Him to do, then what right do people have to try and tell God what to do? That's part of the simplicity in Christ. You have to ask simple, stupid questions. The answer becomes very obvious.

John 15:1: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the **husbandman**." That's an interesting word: husbandman/farmer, etc. Farmer really wouldn't fit here. Husbandman is the best, because it means *someone who is married to the land* and takes care of the land and the crop like a husband does a wife. That's much more fitting. It shows tender, loving care—doesn't it? *Yes!*

Verse 2: "He takes away every branch in Me that does not bear fruit... [There's going to be some branch plucking going on here quickly—right?] ...but He cleanses each one that bears fruit...' That's the whole purpose of trials; that's the whole purpose of difficulties. When William Tyndale said, 'If everything went smooth and nothing went wrong, then our faith would be vain, indeed! If God bids you to go over the sea, He will send a tempest to test you whether you believe Him or no.' It's easy to say that you believe in God and trust God, if you're driving a Rolls Royce and sitting on a bank account that has millions and millions and say, 'I love God.' If you end up like Job and you lose your Rolls Royce and everything, then it's another thing. Do you still love God?

So, every trial you have count it as a blessing, "...in order that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean through the word that I have spoken to you.... [that's part of the right standing with God] ...Dwell in Me, and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but only if it remains in the vine, neither *can* you *bear fruit* unless you are dwelling in Me. I am the vine, *and* you *are* the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing" (vs 2-5). That is nothing unto eternal life. Absolutely, that's what that means.

When you get down to it, people really can't do anything without God anyway: Who created them, gave them abilities, created their hands and feet and whatever they can do with their mind. It all has to come from God anyway—right? In fact, you can do nothing at all unless it comes from God.

Verse 6: "If anyone does not dwell in Me, he is cast out as a branch, and is dried up; and men gather them and cast *them* into a fire, and they are burned.... [There will be a Lake of Fire and they will be burned, just like Jesus said.] ... <u>If</u> you dwell

in Me, and My words dwell in you..." (vs 6-7). That says a lot—doesn't it? You have to have the words of Christ *dwelling in you*. You have to come from the point of beginning with the Word of God when God calls you:

- to begin to understand it
- to begin to put it together
- live by it
- use it more
- understand it more

Then it has to come to the point that it is *dwelling in you*. In other words, with the Spirit of God and the Word of God that's what motivates you to do what you do. That's the whole process of conversion. That's what it's all about. The ultimate of that is to have the mind of Christ.

Philippians. 2:5: "**Let** this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." That's something you have to *let* by desire and by wanting, by study, by practice, by living. That's God's Word *dwelling* in you.

Here's the reason, John 15:7: "...you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you." Stop and think; go back and think many years back. Have not all your prayers been answered that were prayers in truth and sincerity and love? Not in selfishness and greed. Haven't all of those been answered? Yes, they have been answered! Were they answered in the way that you may have expected? Many of them, no! Many of them in an entirely different way, but a better way: God's way! So that you can have

- conviction
- faith
- hope
- love

All of this comes from God. That's why this is so important here. That's why in the Passover preparation that John 14-17 *are a love letter from God to you*. This is part of the New Covenant. These are the words of the New Covenant.

Once we get rid of our complacency and strip away the blindness that we have, and really begin to drink in of God's Word, WOW! look what's there! Yes, it's there!

Verse 8: "In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; live in My love. If you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love... [tie that in with John 14:15] ...just as I have kept My Father's commandments and live in His love. (vs 8-10). {see sermon series on Love, specifically #1: When All Else Fails, Remember: God Loves You.}

- when the Church fails
- when the minister fails
- when your friends fail
- when your relatives fail
- when everything else fails
- you're at the bottom of the bucket in failure
- depressed out of your gourd

-remember: God loves you!

Verse 11: "These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment: that you love one another, as I have loved you" (vs 11-12). That's the challenge for the Church today. We've been all so driven against each other—beaten up with fear, rules, hierarchy and all this sort of thing—that you walk into the assembly of the brethren and you don't know who your friend is or who your enemy is; you don't know whether you can talk to someone or whether they're a spy or reporter for the hierarchy. You walk into a group that's supposed to be loving each other and it's like Corinth. Here's this little group over here in tongues, here's a little group over here in Psalms, here's Peter's group, Paul's group, Christ's group, Apollo's group, and they're all kind of looking at each other in a suspicious way. Am I describing something that you've experienced? Yes! Is this what God wants?

Put it all aside! Love each other because Christ loves you. Don't judge each other by appearances, because you're always going to be disappointed. Are you not when you look in the mirror? *Of course!* Love can't thrive in those carnal things! But with God's Spirit we can grow in love and we can grow in grace. When you understand the greatest grace of all then you'll understand that.

Then He talks more about the Father all the way through John 15. Go back and read the rest of it and you'll see there's even more there. We can't cover everything all at one time. Here's what I want you to understand, and this will help unblock many obstacles to faith.

- this will open the door of faith
- this will open the door of love
- this will open the door of belief
- this will help you have a greater relationship with God

—because this is the beginning of the greatest grace that God can give you, and that is a personal relationship with God the Father—through Jesus Christ that the Father Himself has initiated and wants to maintain with you. That's what's important.

John 16:26: "In that day... [after the resurrection and He ascended to the Father] ...you shall ask in My name; and I do not tell you that I

will beseech the Father for you." So much for the saints interceding—right? Catholic doctrine: pray to the virgin Mary and she will intercede for you. He is our Propitiation, our Advocate, we have direct communication. That's the greatest grace! We have direct, instant communication with God the Father in heaven above, the Sovereign of the entire universe! That's why we've been called. That's the whole sum of it, and God wants this relationship to grow!

Verse 27: "For the Father Himself loves you..." You may want to think about that, pray about that. You may want to take some time and repent about all your accusations against God because He didn't do what you wanted. Remember that He loves you, and that everything you have gone through is for a purpose and design that you can grow in that love. Now you can put aside all of those barriers and all of those things that have held you back in your carnality and fear and lay it on Christ and know that the Father loves you and you pray to the Father.

Jesus said how to pray when the disciples said, 'Teach us to pray'? Our Father! Direct access to God the Father. That is the greatest gift of grace! God gives that to us! Verse 27: "For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God."

After Jesus showed Himself to Mary Magdalene early on the first day of the week—the Wave Sheaf Offering Day—just before He ascended to the Father, He told Mary Magdalene, John 20:17: Jesus said to her, 'Do not touch Me, because I have not yet ascended to My Father.... [I want you to think about the rest of this verse.] ...But **go to My brethren** and tell them that I am ascending to **My** Father and **your** Father, and **My** God and **your** God.'"

The reason that God has called us exclusively from the world is because this relationship and gift of grace is so great that it can only be shared with those whom God calls, and those who respond to God. He's not going to waste this in vain on just anybody.

What did Jesus say in His last prayer? Abba, Father, if this cup can pass from Me! We are given the same blessing of calling God the Father 'Abba'—right? How close is that relationship? As close as it can be! There's nothing in the way of that. That's why Paul said that 'if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. There is neither male nor female, Scythian or Barbarian, Jew or Gentile. God has cut all of that away so that you have direct access to Him. Not as a high priest.

Remember where we start out on the Day of Atonement. The high priest, once a year goes in for one ceremony, goes into the Holy of Holies. But now you and I—all of those who have the Spirit of God—can go into the Holy Holies any time, any day or night, right before the throne of God Himself! Now do you understand why Paul said the 'former were the weak and impotent elements of the world'? Yes!

Let's look at some other things here that are important and tie this in with John 6:44. Here again the proper translation of the middle voice verb brings out a profound meaning in the Greek.

Ephesians 1:2: "Grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly things with Christ" (vs 2-3). If you have direct access to God the Father in heaven above, is that not a spiritual blessing? Is that not a heavenly thing? If you have the Spirit of God, is that not a heavenly gift? Yes, it is!

Verse 4: "According as **He has personally chosen us...**" That's the middle voice verb, which means that the action that comes from God shows His personal involvement toward you. God is the One Who is going to benefit, as well as you. Don't you benefit in that because you have God's love and He has personally called you? Yes! Does God benefit in it? Yes, because He increasing His Family—correct? He didn't leave it to an angel. He didn't leave it to someone else.

"...He has personally chosen us for Himself... [that's what it means in the Greek] ... before the foundation of the world... [God had His plan before the foundation of the world, and He calls us and plugs us into His plan, so to speak.] ... in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love" (v 4). That's another gift of grace—isn't it? The imputed righteousness of Christ! With a repentant heart, loving God, believing God, having His Word written in your heart and mind and all of this together makes you Holy and blameless before God!

Isn't that astounding! That's why the emphasis needs to be on repentance and on a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, rather than focusing on sin to overcome. If you have that relationship, you will overcome sin—right? Yes! Everyone knows his or her own sins—right? The preacher can't get rid of them by standing up and condemning you and beating you over the head with fear, because of sin. Rather, he needs to teach you to look to God the Father and Jesus Christ and have this relationship, and let Christ take care of

it, and let God the Father inspire it to be removed from you, because:

- you love God
- He loves you
- He personally called you
- He drew you

This is amazing stuff, brethren! This is something!

Colossians 1:10: "That you may walk worthily of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God... [lifelong project] ...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..." (vs 10-12).

How many times have you heard in a sermon: 'You've got to do this to be qualified for the Kingdom of God'? Yes, there are certain things we need to do, that's true, but Who qualifies us? God does! The Father has made us qualified, because He loves us.

"...for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light; Who has **personally rescued us from the power of darkness**... [That says a lot—doesn't it? There are going to many verses like this that brings out in greater detail, with far more meaning, what the Scriptures really say.] ...and has transferred *us* unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love" (vs 12-13).

Hebrews 6:14—talking about the covenant that God gave to Abraham: "... 'Surely in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply you."

Verse 17: "In this *way* God, desiring more abundantly to show the heirs of the promise the unchangeable nature of His own purpose, confirmed *it* by an oath; so that by two immutable things..." (vs 17-18).

Let's understand something, this is really important to grasp: When God says something, is it true? Of course! Will it happen? Yes, indeed! When He swears by Himself He has made that promise absolutely guaranteed, immutable, unchangeable and it will happen! That's how we need to approach God, with that assurance. That's why you never again have to have a prayer where you get down on your knees and you pray to God, and when you get up you say, 'Well, I wonder if He heard me?' You just killed your prayer—didn't you? Yes!

"...two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope that has been set before us; which hope

we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and steadfast, and which enters into the *sanctuary* within the veil... [The door to God the Father has been opened, and *that is the greatest gift of grace!*] ...where Jesus has entered for us *as* a forerunner, having become a High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec" (vs 18-20).

Remember when Stephen was being stoned and he looked up into the heaven, and he said, 'I see God with the Son of man standing at His right hand!' That's exactly what takes place when you pray.

- Christ is there to *intercede*
- Christ is there to advocate
- Father is there to *hear*

You pray to the Father, because the Father Himself loves you! That ought to give us great hope, great confidence and great understanding. Let's carry this a little bit further. That's why it's important to understand the covenant that we are in. God has promised by two immutable things that it's impossible for God to lie.

- that's why we are to believe God
- that's why we are to *love* God
- that's why we are to **serve** God

Hebrews 10:16: "This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days,' says the Lord: 'I will give My laws into their hearts, and I will inscribe them in their minds." That's what God is doing, the process of conversion. He will give you

- His love
- His hope
- His joy
- His faith
- His self-control

All of these things come in time.

Verse 17: "And their sins and lawlessness I will not remember ever again.' Now, where remission of these *is*, *it is* no longer *necessary to offer* sacrifices for sin. Therefore, brethren, having confidence to enter into the *true* Holiest by the blood of Jesus" (vs 17-19).

You are to use that *greatest gift of grace* to pray directly to God the Father every single day and every minute or time that you need to. You don't have worry about seeing some 'important' person. You have the Sovereign Ruler of the universe you can go to any minute of any day; you have direct access. What a blessing! What tremendous thing! Absolutely marvelous!

That's why Paul says, v 20: "By a new and living way, which He consecrated for us through the veil (that is, His flesh)."

Let's see where John spoke of this; that it was going to happen. This is what he's talking about. As John reveals the Father, and as we are given some of these other details by Paul, etc., it's really tremendous, brethren. It really is! That's why it's so important that on the Sabbath Day that we understand this: We keep the Sabbath to fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. That's the true fellowship. When you love each other, then when you shake hands, Christ in that person is shaking hands with you. When you hug each other, Christ is hugging you. Christ is in you, hugging the other person—is that not true? Yes, it is!

That's what God wants. He doesn't want some superficial, artificial—Hooray! Hooray!—kind of stuff. He wants it from the heart. He wants it because of love and conviction. *The door is always open!*

John 10:1: "Truly, truly I say to you, the one who does not enter the sheepfold through the door, but climbs up some other way, that one is a thief and a robber." If you try and change the Gospel, you're a thief and a robber, and you're not going to get to God the Father except through Christ. Isn't that right? Isn't that what He said? Yes! He is the Way, the Truth and the Life! There's only ONE door!

Verse 2: "But the one who enters through the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he brings the sheep out, he goes before them... [He's not requiring anything of you that He's not already done.] ...and the sheep follow him because they know his voice" (vs 2-4).

That's why it's so important that for whomever is doing the teaching to teach the Word of God. Wasn't that what Paul charged Timothy to do? He said, 'I charge you before the Lord Jesus Christ Who shall judge the living and the dead. Preach the Word!' Don't give us psychology. Don't give us good ideas. Preach the Word: spiritually feed, nourish, up-build.

Anyone who teaches is going to have a greater judgment if he doesn't do that. That's the first judgment upon him—is it not? What are you doing standing in a pulpit—or sitting in a pulpit—pretending to be a minister of Jesus Christ and you 'lead My sheep astray'? Whomever you may be! Whomever the dumb sheep are that follow, *you deserve what you get!* If you don't listen to the voice of Christ, and you listen to a hireling, you're dead meat!

The truth is, those who are really converted, v 5: "But they will never follow a stranger... [They

will get out of there—right? Why have people left? To get away!] ...for they will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus spoke this parable to them, but they did not understand what He was saying to them. Therefore, Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, I am the door of the sheep'" (vs 5-7). Only way to God the Father is through Christ! That is the Door! And the door to the Holy of Holies, He's opened up, He's walked through, He is there and it is open for those who love God and have His Spirit and look to the Father. The Father has personally called them and personally loves them. You won't trade that for anything—will you? No, not at all!

Verse 8: "All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers... [All other religions. You can just label them right down the line.] ...but the sheep did not hear them." Rather, the sheep were slaughtered and killed by them.

Verse 9: "I am the door. If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and shall find pasture." You will never hunger, you will never thirst—right? Isn't that what Jesus promised? Yes, indeed!

Verse 10: "The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." That doesn't necessarily mean in this life. He promises 'sufficiency in all things' in this life—right? Yes! But we have life more abundantly in this life with the Spirit of God and the relationship with God—don't we? Yes, we do! Not in things! Not in physical possessions! But in relationship with God, with the priceless Holy Spirit of God.

Verse 11: "I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But the one who is a hireling, and who is not *the* shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep, and flees. And the wolf seizes the sheep and scatters them. Now the hireling flees because he is a hireling and has no concern for the sheep" (vs 11-13). He's only worried about his own skin—right? *Yes!* He's only interested in the money. 'Well, why did you stay?' *I've got a family and children to support!* There's your answer: a hireling! He has no concern for the sheep.

Verse 14: I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are* Mine, and am known of those who *are* Mine. Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (vs 14-15)." That is a blessing that God has given us, that we can have this relationship.

1-John 1:1: "That which was from *the* beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our own eyes, that which we

observed for ourselves and our own hands handled, concerning the Word of life; (and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and are bearing witness, and are reporting to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us); that which we have seen and have heard we are reporting to you in order that you also may have fellowship with us... [Here's the key, this is the greatest gift of grace]: ...for the fellowship—indeed, our fellowship—is with the Father and with His own Son Jesus Christ.

That is the greatest gift of God! The greatest gift that God can give you!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter (except where noted)

Scriptural Referenced:

- 1) Romans 4:16-25
- 2) Romans 5:1-5
- 3) John 12:35-40, 42-49
- 4) John 13:13-17
- 5) John 14:1-14, 23-24, 30-31
- 6) John 15:1-7
- 7) Philippians 2:5
- 8) John 15:7-12
- 9) John 16:26-27
- 10) John 20:17
- 11) Ephesians 1:2-4
- 12) Colossians 1:10-13
- 13) Hebrews 6:14, 17-20
- 14) Hebrews 10:16-20
- 15) John 10:1-15
- 16) 1 John 1:1-3

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Galatians 2
- Matthew 24
- John 14-17
- John 6:44

Also referenced: Sermon Series:

Love Series (specifically #1: When All Else Fails, Remember: God Loves You)