

# RADICAL GRACE

“Justifying the ungodly”

## Introduction

1. This is the second of six exercises that have as a goal to “walk in the light” of “reality”:
  - a. Sensing the depth of my need. (self awareness)
  - b. Understanding the extent of God’s grace. (the word of the cross)**
  - c. Walking through true repentance. (coming to our senses)
  - d. Experiencing the power of God’s love. (constrained by His love)
  - e. Entering intimate community. (members of one another)
  - f. Committing to meaningful serve. (here am I Lord, send me)
2. In this exercise the goal is to come to deeply sense the radical grace of Christ through the cross by faith.
3. This exercise will involve the following elements.
  - a. Understand the radical nature of God’s grace in the Gospel as revealed in the teaching of Paul.
  - b. Prayer for insight and conviction to deeply sense the grace of God in Christ.
  - c. Meditative waiting on God’s Spirit.
  - d. Journaling
4. My objective is to move toward the posture of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:1-11
  - a. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” vs.1. I am to realize that there is no condemnation for me in Christ no matter how imperfect my record in the flesh might be.
  - b. “For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,” vs.6. I am to realize that the sphere or perspective from which I choose to see myself will determine whether or not I have peace or shame.

### A. The goal

1. The goal is not to become morally perfect (even through the power of the Spirit working in our lives) but to see myself as justified by faith in Christ’s perfection.
2. I am to deeply realize that God accepts me without approving of everything I think, believe, or do.
3. I am to be in awe of and thankful for the radical nature of God’s grace in Christ that is offered to all through faith.

### B. A suggested way to proceed.

1. The radical grace in Christ through faith is realized by understanding the Scripture’s teaching on the meaning of the cross.
  - a. It is not experienced through mystical encounters or community support apart from Scriptural revelation although both can be used to illustrate the truths of the gospel revelation.
  - b. Our position in Christ by faith is true apart from our experience in that it is a legal standing.

- c. Study the material provided on the Scriptural basis for the atonement (below under D, E, & F).
- 2. The full realization of the freedom that I have in Christ is often realized through a special work of the Spirit in my life, which enables me to understand and receive as true the radical grace of God in Christ.
  - a. I should seek the work of the Spirit in my heart realizing that his ministry is to reveal Christ to me. At each juncture of my study I must pray that the full impact of these truths will be realized and that the freedom from shame and guilt that they offer will be experienced. Eph.1:18-23, 3:14-19
  - b. The graciousness of the Christian community can play an important role in underscoring the radical nature of God’s grace. If possible I must place myself in the company of individuals who can and will assure me of God’s forgiveness by expressing it in their words and actions.

**C. The nature of God reveals the necessity and meaning of Christ’s death.**

- 1. **God is holy and just.** God’s love without God’s holiness would be unjust. God’s holiness made a penalty for sin necessary. When I neglect God’s holiness in my understanding of the cross I make God to be soft on sin.
- 2. **God is loving and merciful.** God’s holiness without God’s love would be unbearable. God’s love endured the penalty for the transgressor and made payment of the penalty possible. When I neglect God’s love in my understanding of the cross I make God to be and angry tyrant.
- 3. Of the Cross of Christ Thomas Oden says, “In the love of the Triune God is found its source, in the justice of the Triune God its necessity, and in the wisdom of the Triune God its method.”
- 4. The atonement has an active and passive aspect that come from Christ’s life under the Law. **Gal.4:4** “But when the fullness’ of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.”
  - a. **Active** – Christ lived a perfect life fulfilling the demands of God’s character as expressed in the Law of Moses. His vicarious obedience produced the righteousness of faith required of all humanity. According to God’s reckoning, the faithful are viewed as if Christ’s righteousness had become theirs (Gal.4:4-5; Rom.5:8; 8:3; 10:4; Phil.3:9; Matt.5:17)
  - b. **Passive** – Christ died as a substitutionary sacrifice after the image of the lamb of the old covenant. His vicarious death produced the penalty for sin owed by all humanity. **2 Cor.5:21** “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us”  
 Christ lived a perfectly sinless life but when our sins were imputed to him he became guilty because of us and bore the just wrath of a holy God as the one who was now the sinner.  
 There are three great imputations in Scripture – the imputation of Adam’s sin to all humanity, the imputation of human sin to Christ, and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer.

The imputation of Adam’s sin to the human race	The imputation of the sins of the world to Christ at the cross	<b>The imputation of Christ’s righteousness to the believer</b>
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Four kinds of righteousness.

<b>Perfect righteousness of God</b>	This is expressed by the nature of God alone.
<b>Relative righteousness of the flesh</b>	This is the relative moral goodness of man.
<b>Imputed righteousness of faith</b>	<b>This is the perfect righteousness of Christ credited to the believer's account by God.</b>
<b>Imparted righteousness of the Spirit</b>	This is the relative but true character of Christ being lived out through the obedient believer.

**D. Key texts that relate to the atonement for my sins at the cross of Christ.**

1. **Romans 3:21-5:21** is a continuation of the study of Romans begun in step #1 (personal audit). This is a key sequel to a study of the first three chapters of Romans.
2. The atonement was a **RANSOM SACRIFICE** paid to the holy demands of God for the sinners' freedom from just condemnation.
  - a. There are a number of texts that make this point.
    1. **1 Cor.6:20** "For you have been bought with a price"
    2. **Gal.4:5** "in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law,"
    3. **Mk.10:45** "to give His life a ransom for many."
    4. **Heb.9:12** "and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption."
    5. **Eph.1:7** "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"
  - b. This purchase is a once and forever transaction (**Heb.10:14** "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.")
3. The atonement was a **PROPITIATION** or satisfaction of all God's righteous demands upon the sinner (**Rom.3:25** "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed")
4. It provided the basis by which the world is **RECONCILED** unto God (**Rom.5:10** "For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we will be saved by His life.")
5. The atonement was a **VICARIOUS** (substitutionary) provision whereby Christ died in the place of the sinner (**1 Pet.3:18** "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God,").

**E. Key texts that relate to faith in Christ as a means of forgiveness.**

1. Evangelicals have believed that the Word of God and faith are the primary means of grace.

	<b>God's grace</b>	<b>Christ's death</b>	<b>Man's faith</b>
<b>Forgiveness</b>	Eph.1:7	Matt.26:28	Acts 10:43
<b>Justification</b>	Titus 3:4-7	Rom.5:9	Rom.3:28

<b>Reconciliation</b>	Rom.5:1-2	Rom.5:10	Rom.5:1
<b>Redemption</b>	Eph.1:7	1 Pet.1:18-19	Gal.3:13-14
<b>Sanctification</b>	1 Cor.1:2-3	Heb.13:12	Acts 26:18
<b>New life</b>	Eph.2:4-5	2 Cor.5:14-17	Jn.20:31
<b>Adoption</b>	Eph.1:5-6	Gal.4:5-6	Gal.3:26

2. The Scriptural support for **FAITH** as a means of grace.

- **Acts 11:17** “If God therefore gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?” (to baptize)
- **Jn.1:12** “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name:”
- **Jn.3:14-16** “that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.”
- **Jn.7:37-40** “every one who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life;”
- **Acts 10:43** “that through His name every one who believes in Him has received forgiveness of sins.”
- **Acts 13:38-39** “through Him every one who believes is freed”
- **Acts 15:9** “cleansing their hearts by faith.”
- **Rom.3:21-4:8** “But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.”
- **Rom.9:33** “and he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed.”
- **Rom.10:10** “for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation.”
- **1 Cor.1:21** “to save those who believe”
- **Gal.2:16** “a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus”
- **Gal.3:2** “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?”
- **Gal.3:26** “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”
- **Eph.1:13** “having also believed, you were sealed in Him”
- **Eph.2:8-10** “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”
- **1 Tim.1:16** “for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”
- **1 Jn.5:1** “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”
- **1 Jn.5:13** “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”

F. **My position in Christ is a result of the atonement being applied through faith to my life.**

1. Most of the great doctrinal epistles of the New Testament may be divided into a general two-fold division: first, that which represents the work of God already accomplished for the believer, and, second, that which represents the life and work of the believer for God. It is important to note the divine order in presenting these most vital issues. The positions to which the believer is instantly lifted by the power and grace of God are always mentioned first and without reference to any human merit or promises. It is the divine purpose that a Christian's conduct should be inspired by the fact that he is already saved and blessed with

all the riches of grace in Christ, rather than by the hope that an attempted imitation of the Christian standard of conduct will result in salvation. (Lewis Sperry Chafer).

2. **Eph.2:4-10** “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast; For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for Good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

The first part of the epistle	The second part of the epistle
Identity	Responsibility
Wealth in Christ	Walk as Christians
Security	Significance
Justification	Sanctification
Indicative	Imperative

3. Positional truth:
  - a. It is **non-experiential** - it consists of facts about us that may not be felt by us.
  - b. It is **not progressive** - it is complete and cannot be improved upon.
  - c. It must be **learned** through teaching - it is known through the revelation of Scripture.
  - d. It is **acknowledged through faith** - it is accepted only as we believe what the Bible says.
  - e. It is **not related to human merit**.
4. The following chart gives a comparison of our position in Christ and our experience as Christians.

Our position in Christ	Our experience in Christ
regeneration	faith
sealing with the Spirit	assurance of salvation
indwelling of the Spirit	filling with the Spirit
justification	freedom from guilt feelings
member of the body of Christ	fellowship with believers

G. **Some important distinctions must be made to clarify the relationship between faith and faithfulness.**

Level #1  
Intellectual awareness  
“knowing about Christ”

Free Grace people are sometimes accused of believing that this is all that is necessary for salvation.

Level #2

**Intellectual assent**

“superficial confession of faith in Christ”

James 2:19 “the demons believe and shudder.”

This is what Free Grace people believe is necessary for salvation.

Level #3

**Heartfelt Trust**

“heartfelt confession of faith in Christ”

Rom.10:9 “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe **in your heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;”

<b>Hope</b>	<b>Love</b>	<b>Justification</b>
“counting on Christ as one’s righteousness”	“inner marker of true faith”	“declared righteous”

This is what some Discipleship Salvation people believe is necessary for salvation.

Level #4

**Commitment of ones life to serve God (good intentions)**

“the process of sanctification”

Other Discipleship Salvation people believe this is necessary for salvation.

Level #5

**Obedience (good works)**

“outer marker of true faith”

- True faith is more than intellectual awareness or assent.
- True faith does not take the form of faithfulness.
- True faith always produces inner fruit (hope and love).
- True faith normally produces outer fruit (faithfulness).

**H. What steps can I take?**

1. Much of this step consists of being taught certain truths about the nature of the work of Christ on the cross. This is not a feeling that comes over me or a mystical work of God where by I “get it.” Paul argues with linier logic and with legal language to make his point about my justification through faith.
2. It is not enough to mentally understand the grace of God. I must actually receive and believe it is true.
3. I should pray for ears to hear this truth.

**I. How will I know if this step has been successful?**

1. I will know this step is complete when I understand the grace of God at a level that makes me wonder if it isn't too radical in that it takes away the threat and fear of the wrath of God should I sin. If this message is true, what will keep us from sinning?
2. I will know this step is complete when I sense a level of freedom and acceptance that is truly "good news" in that it liberates me from the condemnation of the law.