



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

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Attuned to Grace

by – J. Phillip Scranton

Grace is usually defined as favor, and in the case of sinners as unmerited favor. But this is a narrow sense for a word with broad meaning and application. Grace involves the whole method of operation employed by God that accredits all glory to Himself.



The Scriptures give abundant examples of how “the stupidity of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (I Corinthians 1:25 – Concordant Version).

... The One Who [God] is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11 – Concordant Version).

All is out of God – all originates in Him. All is through God – He is the great Cause behind everything and brings to pass everything that happens. All is for God – everything serves His purpose, and nothing can come to be apart from His design.

Seeing that out of Him and through Him and for Him is all: to Him be the glory for the eons! Amen! (Romans 11:36 – Concordant Version).

These verses are true regardless of our belief, appreciation or understanding. But a vital part of our life and service for God depends upon our realization of this truth. And that vital part involves this matter of grace.

Paul tells us plainly that very few who are wise, powerful or noble are among the ranks of the calling in grace. The reason for this is to exclude all boasting of the flesh.

For you are observing your calling, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh; not many powerful, not many noble (I Corinthians 1:25 - Concordant Version).

Shamgar slew 600 Philistines with an oxgoad; Sisera, captain of the Canaanite host, was slain by a woman with a glass of milk and a tent peg; Gideon and 300 men defeated the hordes of the Midianites with pitchers, torches and a shout; the shepherd boy defeated Goliath with a sling; Jehoshaphat placed the singers in front of the army as the people went out to face the enemy – not a sword of Judah was unsheathed, yet it took three days to carry away the spoil; Israel, the smallest and weakest nation, will rule the earth; the ecclesia, unworthy of the smallest earthly blessing, is blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing among the celestials.

Great and mighty are the workings of grace, and the glory always belongs to God. Yet before we can be profitable instruments of grace in God's operation, we may need some adjustment. Probably all of us have some degree of talent or self-reliance which sets us askew to the framework of grace. Thus it is necessary for God to bring about the trials and testings that dispel the confidence of the flesh and encourage reliance upon God.

Paul's life is full of examples that illustrate the principles of grace. Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, was energetic and intelligent. But because he was self-reliant and capable, he needed to be schooled by the Lord in the workings of grace. How significant ►

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it is that his life of service to the Lord began with three days of blindness and helplessness. His second letter to the Corinthians abounds with such experiences, but we will focus on the one in which the light of his self-confidence flickered out.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which came to us in the province of Asia, that we were inordinately burdened, over our ability, so that we were despairing of life also. But we have the rescript of death in ourselves, that we may be having no confidence in ourselves, but in God (II Corinthians 1:8-9 – Concordant Version).

We cannot be sure what incident in the apostle's experience is referred to here, but that is immaterial. What Paul wanted the Corinthians to realize was the depth of despair to which he had sunk: "...so that we were despairing of life."

The difficulties appeared so insurmountable that, to Paul, it seemed pointless to continue living. Possibly the reader has experienced similar feelings. But the Lord did not leave Paul in that condition. Soon Paul was to say,

... we are not despondent ... Being, then, courageous always ... we are encouraged ... we are ambitious always (II Corinthians 4:1, 6; 5:6-7, 9 – Concordant Version).

What then was God's purpose for giving Paul such an experience? The answer is not far to seek. Paul said he had an official decree of death in himself so that his confidence would not be in himself but in God.

But we have the rescript of death in ourselves, that we may be having no confidence in ourselves, but in God, Who rouses the dead" (II Corinthians 1:9 – Concordant Version).

We should also look for the same design in the trials we face. Realizing that all things are of God, we can find our afflictions turning ourselves from self-confidence to reliance upon God. When the glory goes to God, grace can work mightily in and through us.

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Bible Student's Notebook™

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

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My Story

"We also believe, and therefore speak." Testimonies of Believers #4

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, 'I believed, and therefore have I spoken;' we also believe, and therefore speak (II Corinthians 4:13).

My Change in Beliefs

by – J. Phillip Scranton

Author of *Journey to and through the Second Death* (2008)

In the early 1970's, through much prayer and soul searching, I came to the conclusion that God wanted me to "feed His sheep." To me this meant preaching – quite a change of lifestyle – and going to college for training.

My parents were Christians. My father was a Baptist preacher and school teacher, and my mother was a school teacher also. They were sincere, Bible-believing people who did their best to live what they believed. To me, their sincerity and testimony gave credence to the denomination in which I was raised. I also knew there were true believers in other denominations, but I had no reason to join a denomination other than the Baptists.

My Preparation

I enrolled at *Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College* in Mayfield, KY. It is now simply *Mid-Continent University*. I worked 32 hours a week on night shift and went to school full time during the day. My wife Donna also worked and took some classes. At that time we had 2 children. It was a very busy time in our lives. My major was Bible, and I took 15 hours of Greek and later had 8 hours of Hebrew in graduate studies. This does not make me a language expert, but it gave me enough background to be able to do some translation work for myself.

Andrew Jukes

I attended college year-round to be able to finish as soon as possible, and there was little time for

anything other than studying for classes and preparing for tests. However, I read some books additional to the requirements, and there were 3 that really impressed me – all by Andrew Jukes: "*Types in Genesis*," "*The Law of the Offerings*," and "*The Names of God*." I found in Jukes writings a reverence for the Scriptures and an insight and understanding of them that seemed to loom above anything else that I had read. There was no significant teaching in these books regarding the ultimate salvation or reconciliation of all mankind.

About the time I graduated from *Mid-Continent*, I was offered a position as pastor of a church, which I accepted. Shortly thereafter I ordered a book by Andrew Jukes from a bookstore in a shopping mall. I wanted to get anything of his that was in print. It was titled, "*The Restitution of All Things*."

Wow! That book really stood me on my head. Jukes went into many different areas of the Scripture's teaching that deal with the ultimate reconciliation of all mankind. If the book had been written by anyone else, I would have thrown it aside and forgotten about it. But I had already come to have great confidence in the author, and the things he said were too reasonable and well-founded to totally discredit.

My Extensive Search

This initiated a year-long search for me. In school I studied to grasp a body of knowledge and pass tests. Now I was studying to find something out ►

for myself. I was studying something that called a significant part of my livelihood into question. For the next year I borrowed and bought every book I could get that supported the teachings of endless torment and of universal salvation. In addition to this, as the biblical questions relating to translation came into focus, I went back and translated the passages myself and read the comments of many language experts and commentators on the Scriptures. At the end of a year of intensive study, I was thoroughly convinced that the Bible does not teach endless torment or separation from God for the lost. It clearly does teach that all mankind will ultimately be reconciled to God.

I was using the *King James Version* of the Bible. I found that there were two different teachings on this topic in the Bible, and they obviously are in contradiction with one another.

Universal Salvation Passages

All men drawn to Christ: John 12:32

All mankind justified: Romans 5:18-20

Whole world propitiated for: I John 2:2

All reconciled: Colossians 1:20

All gathered in Christ: Ephesians 1:10

All quickened: I Corinthians 15:22

God's righteousness for all: Romans 3:22-23

All mankind saved: I Timothy 4:9-11

All confessing Jesus is Lord: Philippians 2:9-11

All creation delivered from the bondage of corruption: Romans 8:19-23

All ransomed: I Timothy 2:16

Death will be abolished: I Corinthians 15:26

No more curse: Revelation 22:3

Christ destroys the works of the devil, not vice versa: I John 3:8

The context of these passages does not limit the salvation spoken of to believers only. Notice also that a broad variety of terminology is used in speaking of the salvation of all.

Endless Torment Passages

The teaching of endless torment depends on the words "*forever and ever*."

... He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness [no forgiveness for the aion], but is in danger of eternal damnation (Mark 3:29).

... [False teachers] ... to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever (II Peter 2:17).

... Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever (Jude 13).

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever ... (Revelation 14:11).

And her [the great harlot's] smoke rose up forever and ever (Revelation 19:3).

... Where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:10).

... It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire (Matthew 18:8).

Depart from Me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:46).

... Them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who

shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (II Thessalonians 1:8-9).

... *Of the doctrine of ... eternal judgment*
... (Hebrews 6:2).

The Resolution

Although it is not readily apparent, there is a flaw with the teaching of endless torment. The flaw is inconsistent translation. The word frequently translated "forever" is *aion*, and the word translated, "eternal" and "everlasting" is *aionios*. *Aion* is a noun, and *aionios* is an adjective. They are obviously from the same root. Many times *aion* is translated as "world," or some other word. Why is it not consistent? Also, ask yourself the question: "If forever means endless, what does forever **and** ever mean?"

There are some passages where *aion* is translated "world," and, if it had been translated "forever" instead, the sentence would be nonsense. Notice the following:

The harvest is the end of the world (Matthew 13:39).

If the translation was consistent it would read, "*The harvest is the end of forever.*" But forever cannot end, can it?

So shall it be in the end of this world
(Matthew 13:40).

Translated consistently this would read, "*So shall it be in the end of forever.*"

Matthew 13:49; 24:3; 28:20; I Corinthians 10:11 are further examples where consistent translation would speak of the end of "forever." Newer translations are changing the rendering of "world" in these passages to "age." This gives a better understanding of the verse where the change is made, but it hides even more deeply the problem with *aion* being translated as "forever" in any other passage.

A similar problem may be found with beginning. Does "forever" or "eternity" have a beginning?

He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began (Luke 1:70).

Consistently rendered this would be "... His holy prophets, who have been since forever began" or "since eternity began." Does the existence of God's prophets predate the creation of the world and the creation of humanity?

... *that He might deliver us from this present evil world* (Galatians 1:4).

Translated consistently this verse would speak of a "present evil forever," or "present evil eternity." Is there to be no end to evil? Will God never be victorious? Similarly, we would see in Ephesians 6:12 that we wrestle against the rulers of the darkness of this eternity (some MSS).

How Long Is Forever?

The "everlasting" earth (Psalm 78:69; 104:5; Ecclesiastes 1:4) shall pass away (Matthew 24:35; Hebrews 1:10-11; II Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1).

The "everlasting" Sinai covenant (Leviticus 24:8) must pass away (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:7, 13).

The "everlasting" statute of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:32-34) must pass with the coming of the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:1-4, 12-14, 18).

The "everlasting" Aaronic priesthood (Exodus 40:15) must pass away (Hebrews 7:11-12). So also the "everlasting" priesthood of Phineas (Numbers 25:13).

"Forever" is 10 generations of Moabites (Deuteronomy 23:3).

Sodom is set forth for an example, suffering ►

the vengeance of “eternal” fire (Jude 7), but God will bring again the captivity of Sodom, and it will be restored to its former estate (Ezekiel 16:53-55).

There are more.

One of the classic arguments against universal reconciliation is that based on Matthew 25:46,

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

Both eternal and everlasting are translations of the same word *aionios*. Augustine is credited with founding the popular argument that a word used twice in the same sentence must have the same meaning both times, and since the life of believers is surely endless, then the punishment of unbelievers must also be endless. Many have ridden Augustine's band wagon, re-voicing his argument in even stronger terms.

Augustine's principle was right, but his conclusion was wrong. The word has the same meaning in both instances, but the meaning is not endless but *aeonian*, or, age-lasting. The life of believers does not depend on *aionios* for its duration. Believers will be changed and become immortal – death will be nullified – but believers have the life of the coming kingdom ages. They will participate in the life of that great time when all comes under subjection to Christ and His headship.

We know this is true, because if Augustine or any of those echoing his view had done their homework, they would have discovered other sentences where these words are used twice. And, if they had consistently translated eternal or everlasting in both cases, the sentences would become nonsense.

Example 1: Romans 16:25, 26

... According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world [aionios] began, but now is made

manifest, and by the commandment of the everlasting [aionios] God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

If *aionios* is translated everlasting or eternal both times, there is a mystery that is kept secret through eternity, but is now made manifest – a contradiction. If *aionios* is translated as “world” both times, then the revelation of the gospel that Paul brought was made known by the “world God;” but the god of this world blinds the minds of people to prevent them from believing the gospel (II Corinthians 4:4). To speak of the *eonian* God, rather than the “everlasting” God no more limits God to a particular period of time than the phrase “*the God of Abraham*” limits Him to being the God of only one man.

Example 2: Titus 1:2

In hope of eternal [aionios] life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world [aionios] began.

God promised the life of the kingdom ages to believers before the ages began. If *aionios* is translated “eternal” both times, then God promised “eternal” life before “eternity” began. But eternity has no beginning. If *aionios* is translated world both times, then God promised world life before the world began. What is world life? The animals have world life!

Example 3: Galatians 1:4-5

... That He might deliver us from this present evil world [aion], according to the will of God and our Father, to Whom be glory for ever [aion] and ever [aion].

Here we have *aion* used 3 times in the same sentence. If *aion* is consistently translated “forever,” then it speaks of our deliverance from a “present evil forever,” or a “present evil eternity.” Will evil never come to an end? If *aion* were consistently translated “world,” then it speaks of glory to God for the worlds of the worlds. What does that mean?

Example 4: Ephesians 3:9-11

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world [aion] hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal [aion] purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Well, by now you know the drill. Does “eternity” have a beginning from which something can be hid? Can there be an eternal purpose? If there is an eternal purpose, evidently it is a purpose which is never fulfilled. Or does the passage speak of a “world” purpose which was purposed in Christ? God has a purpose for the eons which is accomplished through the work of Christ Jesus. This purpose was kept secret in earlier eons, but is now manifested.

Example 5: I Timothy 6:17-19

Charge them that are rich in this world [aion], that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal [aionios] life.

Here both the noun and adjective are used in the same sentence. Those who are rich in this eon need to be careful to be devout in their belief so that they will lay hold of the life of the coming ages. They are not rich in this “eternity,” and they are not to lay hold of “world life.”

Augustine failed to do his homework, and so also have all those who came behind him echoing this argument.

For me, the issues are clear. The Bible is the inspired Word of God. It is accurate and true in the original writings. The difficult task of translation will never render a version in English that is perfectly equivalent to the original Greek and Hebrew. There is an unmistakable contradiction between the teachings of the reconciliation of all and the endless torment of the lost. This contradiction is eliminated by consistent translation.

God’s judgment is coming for the unbelieving, and it will be accurate and complete as needed. But it will not cause needless suffering and it will be part of a process of bringing all to God, not a process of separating from God.

What we haven’t touched on is the whole teaching of the *eons*, or ages, which details many of the things the believers with *eonian* life, or age-lasting life (not eternal life) will be doing during the future kingdom eons, when they are enjoying that life with its privileges and responsibilities. *Believers have a special salvation, but they do not have the only salvation* (I Timothy 4:9-10). The purpose of being chosen and called is not just personal salvation, but to be part of the administration that will bring all under the headship of Christ.

The Hebrew word *olam* is used the same way as the Greek *aion*. *Olam* means “obscurity” with reference to time. Sometimes it refers to an age, sometimes a lifetime, but it cannot bear the idea of eternity.

Arguments for the ultimate salvation of all could be based on other things as well: the fact that God is love; the fact that God is the ultimate cause of all things; the fact that God is in control of all things. These all require an outcome of order and goodness. But the teaching of endless torment stands or falls on the translation of these simple words, and we need not be language experts to see the inconsistency and to realize there is an error with that teaching.

Fear

The Coffin of the Living

by – Aaron Locker

Sometimes your heart forms childish dreams about your desires or fears, and sometimes your heart speaks truths that your mind has been unwilling to accept or possibilities your mind has been actively avoiding. There are only two people who can access the secrets in the locked chambers of our hearts: God, and ourselves.

Why do we hide our love? We know that fear is the coffin of the living, yet we spend our entire lives in it. We see suffering as a curse instead of the gift that God says it is.

A coffin is the place where we put those who have given up the ghost.¹ They no longer have life. They are just passive dust awaiting reanimation. Often, people die because of unforeseen circumstances such as illness or acts of others.

As for the living, we place ourselves in coffins before our due time by letting ourselves be controlled by emotions. This method of giving up the ghost is one that is done willingly. A very common coffin in which we place ourselves is the coffin of fear. It is not the only coffin of the living, but undoubtedly

1. *Pneuma*, in Greek, is the breath we were given by God. When we die, the body returns to the dust from whence it came, and the spirit/ghost/breath returns to God Who gave it.

ATTUNED (continued from page 1886)

There was a time in Israel's history when Judah was attacked and mostly overrun by Assyria. The rab-shakeh (field commander) of Assyria sent a message to King Hezekiah, saying that if Hezekiah was depending upon Egypt for help, he was like a man who was leaning upon a fractured reed. The reed would break under his weight and pierce his hand (Isaiah 36:4-6). This is a perfect example for us. Dependence upon our own abilities or plans to accomplish something for God may yield a result worse than failure.

God can and may use the most talented of individuals. Moses is an example. He was a prophet,

the coffin of choice among humans.

We fear rejection if we talk to people about Christ, so we don't talk about Him. We fear unrequited love from others so we don't give it or even mention it. My heart spoke to me this morning to tell me that if I am bound by my fear, *I AM NOT LIVING* – I am dead. I am inanimate and I would be just as well off lying lifeless in a coffin as I am if I am on life support in one. I will not allow my fear to keep me from the beauty of life any longer.

Why is it hard to communicate our love to the ones we love the most? Do we not know that without love there is no life, and without life we are just dust barely carried by the wind.

Does your life seem dull? Are you looking for that one thing to add some seasoning to it? Start loving. Start speaking love. Start showing love. Live in love and cast out fear because there is no other way to truly live.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love (1 John 4:18).

politician, diplomat, military strategist, leader and poet. But the Scriptures also tell us that he was the most humble of men on earth (Numbers 12:3). It was not the education of Egypt that so thoroughly prepared Moses. It has been said that he still needed his B.D. degree, not "Bachelor of Divinity" but "Backside of the Desert." God schooled him for forty years before he was ready to lead the people.

One's disposition toward himself and toward God is the key issue. Let us remember that it is God Who is accomplishing things. This is the lesson of grace, and if we are to be used of Him, we must be attuned to His glorious operation of grace.