



GRACE COMMUNION
INTERNATIONAL

Living and Sharing the Gospel

Weekly bulletin
September 19 , 2021

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, we will continue to have worship services online through the Zoom platform, until further notice. You are welcome to worship with us on Sunday at 10:30 a.m. If you need information about how to join with us for worship services, please contact Mr. Vautour, minister. The contact information is at the bottom of the bulletin.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

Please note that audio and video sermons and other materials are also available on our local website at www.gcine Brunswick.org

Last articles posted on our local website under **Featured Articles: Northern Light: Living in A Political World and the GCI Monthly prayer bulletin.**

Offerings:

You can make your donation by cheque; Address: Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5.

You can call 1-306-653-2705 (GCI Canada main phone number) and make credit card donation.

E-transfers to khorwood@gcicanada.ca (her full name is Kathleen Horwood). There is no need for a password as the donations are deposited directly into the GCI banking account. In the subject or message line, write the name of your church and your member number. Most banks send an immediate confirmation of successful deposit. If you do not know your member number, please write to Mr. Vautour at the email address below.

You can also donate to our GCI Canada website at [Grace Communion International - Canada \(gcicanada.ca\)](http://Grace Communion International - Canada (gcicanada.ca)); click on Donate. In the donation box detail, and under **Fund**, make sure you click on General. In the message box, make sure that you identify your church and your church member number. If you don't know your church number, please contact Mr. Vautour.

Prayer Meeting: The next Bible Study will be on Thursday Sept 23, 2021 @ 7:30 p.m. We will continue in the book of James, chapter 3.

To see specific prayer requests from the church, please go to www.gcine Brunswick.org—under “Members Only” and type the password. If you do not know the password, please contact Mr. Vautour.

Let us pray according to God’s will and as per his instructions: **“1 ¶ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1 Ti 2:1-4 ESV)**

The apostle Paul was inspired to write the following: **“19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free**

from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” (Ro 8:19-21 ESV)

Let us follow the example of Paul when we pray for the universal church and for one another. This is an example of how he prayed, **“9 ¶ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” (Col 1:9-10 ESV)**

Let us pray for our new elected leaders, following next Monday’s election, that disciples of Jesus may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. Let us pray for all Canadians that those who are being called now will respond to God’s calling, accept his gift of reconciliation and be reconciled to Him in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

	<p>Faith Forward and Transitions September 8, 2021 (from gci.org) Hello church! Hopefully, you are aware that our 2021 theme for Grace Communion International is “Faith Forward.” Galatians 2:20 states it very clearly: <i>I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the</i></p>
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life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20 (KJV) It is by the faith OF the Son of God. It is the faith of Jesus in me strengthening my belief and quelling my unbelief. Back in July, we took a short detour from Faith Forward to “Focus onHope” (the theme of our Virtual Celebration). Not everybody could fit into the rhythm of the schedule and participate in the live streaming. The good news is that we recorded most of the presentations and I suspect that many of you are watching and learning from the recorded videos. Enjoy! I am currently preparing to gather with some of our US pastors and their Faith Avenue champions to take a deep dive into all aspects of the Faith Avenue ministries. Please lift this weekend of training up in prayer. This can be a catalyst to move our Faith Forward. In speaking of moving forward, an ongoing process that I have been involved with has been to work through the reality of leaders who are aging toward retirement and entering retirement. It is a privilege to work with leaders who are proactively thinking about who their replacement will be, and how to end their current level of responsibility on a high note. There are no big announcements to make in this video update, but I can mention that we have a GCI Board rotation coming up in October and more news will follow. When I became President of GCI, I came alongside many of our senior, trusted, and faithful leaders and had the privilege of walking with them to their retirement (a responsibility that I never fully anticipated but is a privilege). Retirement is especially tricky as our old paradigm was to work in ministry until you die. Thankfully our good friend Joseph Tkach shifted the culture by his personal example. The “working until you die mentality” is problematic. The most glaring concern with this thinking is that the demands of ministry may send you to an early grave. Another issue is determining what is the best scenario for the extended family. The more difficult piece is when you’re holding on too long and too tightly and possibly standing in the way of an emerging leader that the Lord has called and prepared. Walking through this season is a prayerful journey with many conversations, and it is good that we can reach out to others who have gone in front of us. == In alignment with our 2021 theme, Faith Forward is about growing deeper in

relationship with Jesus and with one another who make up the family of the church. As your President, I have a clear responsibility to our leaders – the ones who are presently serving, and even the ones who will be coming after them. I solicit your prayers and support that together, we handle this responsibility well, strengthened by the faith of Jesus in us. Thank you for responding to the faithfulness and love of Jesus, and your ongoing support to Grace Communion International!

Too Much Grace? by Gary Deddo



Gary W. Deddo received a PhD from the University of Aberdeen in 1991. He is President and Professor of Theology at Grace Communion Seminary.

Sometimes I've heard expressed a concern about emphasizing grace too much. The suggested corrective to this worrisome tendency is to counter-balance it with teaching on obedience or righteousness or other obligations mentioned in Scripture, especially

those in the New Testament. I've been reflecting on this concern and think I might have something useful to say.

A Legitimate Concern

Certainly there is some legitimate concern on the part of those who worry about extending "too much grace." Some people do hold the idea that living by God's grace means that it doesn't matter what we do given that we are saved by grace and not by works. According to this view, grace means no obligations, no rules, and no expected or required patterns of relationship. Grace means that pretty much anything goes since it's all forgiven beforehand. This view sees grace as a free pass—*carte blanche* permission to do whatever one wants. Most persons I know who hold this view, or something like it, don't go quite this far—they seem to know that there are some limits. However, some hold an extreme, and I believe unbiblical, view of grace.

Living without or against any laws or rules is known as *antinomianism*. This problem has been written and preached about throughout church history. The Christian martyr under the Nazis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, called it "cheap grace" in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Antinomianism is addressed in the New Testament. Paul referred to it in when addressing the accusation that his emphasis on grace was encouraging people to "**continue in sin in order that grace may abound**" ([Romans 6:1](#)). Paul's reply was short and direct: "**By no means!**" (v. 2). Then a few sentences later he repeats their charge against him and answers it: "**What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!**" (v. 15).

But What's the Real Problem and Solution?

There is no ambiguity in Paul's response. Those who might want to argue that grace means anything goes because it's all covered are mistaken. But why? What's gone wrong? Is the problem really "too much grace"? And is the solution to counter-balance grace with something else? Is that how Paul and the rest of the New Testament writers understood the problem? Was that how they sought to remedy it? I think the answer to both questions is clearly, "**by no means!**" The whole of the New Testament revelation, founded in Jesus Christ himself, identifies the nature of the problem and its solution differently.

Rather than the problem being "too much grace," the real problem is a misunderstanding of both grace and obedience. Ironically, those who worry about "too much grace" hold the same misunderstanding about grace as those who have no worries at all and so go merrily on their way without giving further thought to living a life of faithfulness to Jesus Christ and the instructions given in the New Testament. Their misunderstanding of grace trips them up and undermines their ability to live a life of joyful obedience in the freedom of Christ—a freedom and joy that both Paul and Jesus talk about.

It took me many years to get to the bottom of this issue, and I didn't get there without a lot of help from others who I learned from, some in person and others through their writings. So let me now try to lay out what I found.

The problem is not too much grace nor is the solution to counter-balance grace with an equal insistence on obedience, works or service. The real problem is thinking that grace means God makes an exception to a rule, a requirement or an obligation. That is a common, everyday misunderstanding of grace. If grace involved merely allowing for exceptions to rules, then yes, a lot of grace would simply yield a lot of exceptions. And if God was said to be *all* gracious, then, we could expect that for *every* obligation or responsibility God would make an exception. The more grace, then the more exceptions to obedience. The less grace, the fewer exceptions allowed. A nice clean proportion. If we have to allow some room for grace in this scheme, then the only question is where to put the balance between grace and requirements: 25/75? 50/50? 75/25?

Such a scheme perhaps describes the best that human grace can achieve. But note that this approach pits grace against obedience. It puts them at odds with one another—always pushing and pulling one another; back and forth, never really settling down since they fight against one another. Each one undoes or negates the other. They are in perpetual contradiction with no hope of ever getting along. And so folks assuming that "this is just the way things have to be," experience this tension within themselves. Externally their lives might look like a teeter-totter, tipping now on one side and then on the other. But fortunately such a scheme does not represent God's kind of grace. The truth about grace sets us free from this false dichotomy.

God's Grace in Person

Question: How does the Bible actually define grace? Answer: Jesus Christ himself is God's grace to us. Paul's benediction ending 2 Corinthians refers to **"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."** Grace is what God freely gives us in his incarnate Son, who in turn, graciously communicates to us God's love and restores us to fellowship with God. What Jesus does towards us reveals to us the nature and character of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Scripture tells us that Jesus bears the stamp of God's exact character ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). It says that **"he is the image of the invisible God"** and that **"all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" in him** ([Colossians 1: 15, 19](#)). He who has seen him **"has seen the Father"** and if we know him we will know the Father ([John 14:7, 9](#)).

Jesus explains that **"I only do what I see the Father doing"** ([John 5:19](#)). He tells us that only he knows the Father and he alone reveals him ([Matthew 11:27](#)). And John tells us that this Word of God, who has existed from the beginning with God, took on a human existence and has shown us **"the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."** While **"the law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."** In fact, **"from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."** And this Son who has existed in the heart of God from all eternity **"has made him known."** ([John 1:14-18](#)).

Jesus is God's grace to us—revealing in word and in action that God himself is full of grace. Grace isn't just one of the things God happens to do every now and then. Grace is who God is. God gives us his grace out of his own nature and character. He does not give out of a dependence upon us, nor does he give because we somehow obligate him to extend his good gifts to us. God gives grace because he has a giving nature. That means that God gives us his grace in Jesus Christ, freely. Paul calls grace a free gift from God in his letter to the **Romans (5:15, 16, 17; 6:23)**. And in his letter to the Ephesians he memorably declared: **"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God — not the result of works, so that no one may boast"** (2:8, 9).

All that God gives us he gives out of his own goodness. God, who is light and in whom is no darkness, gives himself to us freely—in the Son, by the Spirit. And that freely-given life is, for us, both temporal and eternal.

But Was God Always Gracious?

Unfortunately it has often been explained that God originally agreed to give of his goodness (to Adam and Eve and then to Israel) only if his creatures fulfilled certain conditions (obligations) that he set out for them. If they didn't, he would not extend much of his goodness to them. He especially would not extend forgiveness and eternal life.

This erroneous viewpoint sees God as having a contractual, "if you-then I" relationship with his creatures. That contract has conditions or obligations (rules or laws) that humanity must meet in order to receive what God is offering. According to this view, God's primary concern is conformity to his rules. And if we don't measure up, God will withhold his best from us. Worse than that, he will give us what is not good, what leads to death, not life; now and in eternity.

This erroneous view sees Law as the deepest thing about God's nature and thus the most fundamental aspect of God's relationship with his creatures. He wills what he wills and only blesses upon our fulfillment of certain obligations. This God is essentially a contract God who has a legal and conditional relationship with his creatures. He conducts that relationship in a slave-master way. Grace, God's freely giving of his goodness and blessing, is far from the essence of this God. From this perspective, Jesus is viewed as only a minor footnote—an insignificant aspect of who God is. Jesus is an exception to God's rule and will, nature and character.

Of course, if law actually was the most fundamental feature of God's relationship to us, then grace would only be an exception to the law. But it is clear that law is not the most basic way that God relates to us now, and it never has been. God is not fundamentally sheer will or law. This is most clearly seen looking at Jesus who shows us the Father and sends us the Spirit. It is clear when we hear from Jesus about his eternal relationship with the Father and Spirit. Jesus tells us that his nature and character is identical to that of the Father's. Indeed the Father-Son relationship is not one of rules, obligations or the fulfilling of conditions in order to earn or deserve benefits. The Father and Son do not have a legal relationship with each other. They have not drawn up a contract with each other where if one fails to complete their part the other will not fulfill their part. The idea of a contractual, law-based relationship between the Father and the Son is an absurdity. The truth, revealed to us in Jesus, is that their relationship is one of holy love, faithfulness, self-giving and mutual glorification.

As we read Scripture carefully, it becomes clear that God's relationship with his creation and even with Israel is not contractual—it is not one of conditionality. An important point to remember, one that Paul is clear about, is that God's relationship with Israel was not fundamentally one of law, of an if-then contract. God's relationship with Israel began with a covenant, a promise. The Law of Moses (the Torah) came in 430 years after the inauguration of the covenant. Given that timeline, law could hardly be regarded as the foundation for God's relationship with Israel.

In the covenant, God freely pledged himself and his goodness to Israel. And as you will recall it had absolutely nothing to do with what Israel could offer God ([Deuteronomy 7:6-8](#)). Remember that Abraham was a moon worshipper when God made him pledge to bless him and make him a blessing to all the nations ([Genesis 12:4](#)). A covenant is a promise. It is freely chosen and

freely given. **“I will be your God and you shall be my people”** said God to Israel ([Exodus 6:7](#)). God’s pledge of blessing was unilateral—it was established from his side alone. God gave the covenant as an expression of his own nature, character and being. Its establishment with Israel was an act of grace—yes, *grace!*

A careful review of the early chapters of Genesis makes it clear there that God does not act according to some kind of contractual agreement. First, creation itself was an act of free giving. **“And it was good, even very good.”** Eve was a gift of grace to Adam. So were the garden and their good purpose in creation. Was not God’s pursuit of them and giving them an opportunity to repent following their disobedience an act of grace? Consider also God’s provision of animal skins for their clothing. Even their expulsion from the Garden to prevent them from taking of the tree of eternal life in their fallen state, was an act of sheer grace. God’s protection and provision for Cain can only be regarded in the same light. We also see grace in God’s protection of Noah and his family and in his pledge of the rainbow. All these are of grace—freely given gifts of God’s goodness. None of them are rewards for fulfilling some kind of even minimal legal contractual obligation.

Grace as *Unmerited Favor*?

It has often been said that grace is God’s *unmerited favor*. Strictly speaking this is true. But given what we think it implies, it is just barely true. What is false about it is the assumption (almost always lurking in the background) that God originally intended for us to merit his favor. That is utterly false. God did not originally plan on us meriting his favor, but then gave up as he saw us fail. God did not abandon Plan A: Merited Favor for Plan B: Unmerited Favor. No—God never, from the foundations of the earth, wanted a contractual, conditional relationship with us. He never wanted a master-slave relationship. [1] Rather, he wanted all along for his children to have a relationship with him that mirrored as much as possible the relationship God the Father has with his Son in the Spirit.

God always freely gives of his goodness—of himself—to his creatures. And he does so because of who he is, eternally and internally as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All they do towards creation is an overflow of their inward life together. It mirrors, reflects and so gives glory to who God is. A legal and contractual relationship with God would not give the triune creator and covenant-making God glory, but would actually obscure it, even deny it. It would make God into a mere idol. And idols always enter into contractual relationships with their appeasers because they need their worshippers just as much as the worshippers need them. They are mutually dependent. So they mutually use one another for their own self-centered ends. The only question is which “side” will win. The outcome of that competition is largely dependent upon which side is strongest, more powerful, and slightly less dependent than the other. But such a relationship is exactly what the God of the Bible completely repudiates. God is no idol and does not want the kind of contractual, conditional relationship with his people that idols demand. Idols must be appeased, but not the God of Israel and of our Lord Jesus Christ[2]

The smidgen of truth hidden down under the saying that grace is God’s unmerited favor is simply that we don’t merit it. But the implication almost always accompanying that idea is false! God’s favor or blessing (his freely-given goodness) was never meant to be merited. You can “unmerit” God’s blessing, but you can’t merit it and you never could. For if God extended his goodness to us because we merited it, that action would not be motivated by God’s own nature and character. The goodness would not be freely given by a good God. Favor earned is not favor freely given. It is not grace!

The Graciousness of Grace Demonstrated

Grace does not just come into play when there is sin, making an exception to some law or obligation. God is gracious whether there is or is not sin. In other words, God does not need sin to be gracious. However, grace does continue when there is sin. So it is true that God continues to freely give of his own goodness to his creatures even when they don’t merit it.

Even when we sin, God remains faithful because he is faithful, just as Paul says: **“Though everyone be faithless, God will remain faithful”** ([2 Timothy 2: 13](#)). Because God always is true to himself, he persists in extending his love and in pursuing his holy purposes for us even when we rebel and resist. This constancy of grace shows the depth of the freedom that God has to be good toward his creation. **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly...But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us”** ([Romans 5:6, 8](#)). Indeed, the special character of grace shines forth when it shines out in the darkness. And so we most often speak of grace in the context of sin. There is nothing wrong with that. But the problem comes when we think God’s favor was originally to be earned in a legal arrangement with him. Sin can’t stop God’s free giving of his goodness. He remains constant in character, nature and purpose. God is not dependent upon us to remain true to himself. We cannot make God freer than he is, nor by our rejection of it can we take from him his freedom to be gracious.

So God is gracious without sin and God is gracious with sin. God is faithful in being good to his creation and maintaining his good purposes for creation. And we see this most fully in Jesus who cannot be stopped from completing his atoning work by all the forces of evil arrayed against him. Those forces cannot prevent him from giving up his life so that we could have life. No amount of pain, suffering and utter humiliation could deter him from carrying out his holy, loving purposes to reconcile humanity to God. God’s goodness does not require evil to be good. But when it comes upon evil, goodness knows just what to do with it: overcome it, conquer it, and vanquish it. There is no such thing, then, as too much grace.

Our Response to Grace

So far we've looked at the nature of grace and saw that it is an expression of God's own being as seen in Jesus Christ. Now we will look at our response.

So Why the Law (or any other commands)?

Given what we saw about grace, how then do we regard the Old Testament Law and Christian obedience under the New Covenant? If we remember that God's covenant is a unilateral promise the answer more easily falls into place. A promise does call for a response from the one to whom it is made. However, the fulfillment of the promise does not depend upon this response.^[3] There are only two options here: to trust (or have faith or to believe) in the promise or not. The Law of Moses (the Torah) described for Israel much of what trusting God's covenant should look like during its pre-fulfillment stage (prior to Jesus Christ). God graciously provided for Israel ways to live within his covenant (as it was expressed in the Old Covenant). The Law of Moses also described ways that were distrustful of God's covenant promises to Israel. But what the Torah did not do is prescribe how Israel might earn God's favor and blessing—it did not define how to get God to make a promise and then how to keep him faithful to it.

The Torah was freely given by God to Israel. It was meant to help Israel. Paul calls it a “tutor” ([Galatians 3: 24, 25](#)). And so it should be regarded as a good gift of God's grace to Israel. The Law is given inside and under the Old Covenant, which was the covenant of grace in its phase as promise (awaiting the fulfillment in Christ under the New Covenant).

So what difference does the response to grace make? Certainly it makes some difference. But what kind? It is at this point that confusion often arises. If we are to benefit from the promise we must live on the basis of trusting it. This is what is meant by “living by faith.” We see that faithful living exemplified by Old Testament “saints” in Hebrews 11. Yes, there are consequences for not living out of a trust in the promise. Distrust in the covenant and in the God of the covenant severely limits one's experience of the covenant benefits. Israel's distrust cut her off from the source of her life—her sustenance, health and fruitfulness. Distrust blocked her relationship with God to the point where she was unable to receive much of anything from God. And God did not want that, because he is gracious! Thus in Scripture we find strict warnings describing the dire consequences of living in ways that effectively deny God's faithfulness to his word of promise, thus preventing his people from receiving the freely-given grace of God. Instead of blessings, what his faithless people receive is sometimes referred to as “curses.”

But even such warnings given to his people can be regarded as gifts of God's grace. If God did not care about Israel and would just as soon cancel his covenant, there would be no reason for him to warn her at all. He'd just let her go and be done with it. But one of the consequences of living as if you weren't in the covenant is not undoing it, not nullifying it, and not making God change his mind and go back on his promise. God cannot be tempted to be unfaithful to his promise.

God's covenant, Paul tells us, is irrevocable. Why? Because God is faithful and will keep his covenant even when it costs him dearly! God will never go back on his word; he cannot be forced to act uncharacteristically towards his creation or his people. Even in our distrust of the promise we cannot make God to be untrue to himself. This is what is meant by God doing things “for his own name's sake.”

Israel's disobedience did indeed result in bad (even dire) consequences. But all of these occurred within the covenant, under God's grace. God never abandoned Israel and he never went back on his covenant promises. From time to time, God renewed his covenant with Israel, always leading up to the fulfillment of the covenant in Jesus Christ.

Grace Makes No Exceptions!

It's important to realize that God makes no exceptions to his good purposes and holy aims for his people. Because he is faithful God will not give up on us. Instead, he loves us to perfection—the perfection of his Son. God intends to glorify us so that we perfectly trust and love him with all that we are and have and so live out our trust in God's graciousness to the full. Doing so means that our distrusting hearts will be done away with so that our lives perfectly reflect our trust in God's freely given goodness. God's perfect love will love us to completion by justifying us, sanctifying us and finally glorifying us. “**He who began a good work in us will bring it to completion**” ([Philippians 1:6](#)).

Would God be gracious to leave us, in the end, less than whole? What if heaven were filled with individuals for whom exceptions were made: allowing for a lack of faith here, a failure of love there, a bit of unforgiveness here, some bitterness and resentment there, a mite of jealousy here and a mote of selfish pride there? What would that be like? Well, it would be just like it is here and now, but forever! Would God really be gracious to leave us in such an “exceptional” condition for all of eternity? No he would not! In the end, God's grace allows for no exceptions to his ruling grace, to the rule of his love, to the sovereignty of his loving will—because otherwise he would not be gracious.

Where does Obedience Come From?

So where does obedience come from? It arises out of a trust in God's faithfulness to his covenant purposes fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The only obedience that God is interested in is the obedience of faith—faith in God's constancy, in God's faithfulness to his Word, faithfulness to himself ([Romans 1:5; 16:26](#)). Obedience never was and never is an attempt to fulfill conditions to get

God to be faithful, to make God more likely to be good, to get God to be (freely!) gracious. Obedience is our response to grace. Paul is very clear on this in one place especially. He tells us that Israel's failure was not that she did not fulfill certain legal conditions of the Torah, but that she **"did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works"** ([Romans 9: 32](#)). Paul, a Law-keeping Pharisee came to realize the astounding truth that God never wanted him to work up a righteousness of his own through keeping the law. What good would that be even if it were possible (which it is not)? Compared to the righteousness that God intended to give him by grace, compared to having a share in God's own righteousness given to him in Christ, it would be garbage (or worse!).

All along, God intended to share his own righteousness with his people as a gift of grace. Why? Because God is gracious! ([Phil 3:8,9](#)). So how do we receive this freely given gift? By trusting God for it, by having faith in his promise to provide it. Trying to work for that gift—trying to meet certain legal conditions, trying to conform to specified obligations in order to earn God's blessings actually indicate distrust. They indicate unbelief in God's grace.

The obedience that God is looking for is motivated by faith, hope and love for God. The obligations that are described for us throughout Scripture are those of grace. They are not conditions of grace. If we believe in the God's promises and trust in their fulfillment in Christ and then in us, we will want to live in, under and by those promises, as if they are indeed true and trustworthy. If we are not living in a way that expresses trust in God's grace—his being good to us even when we don't deserve it—then we're not really trusting in God's grace!

The obedient life is a trusting life. A disobedient life is one that is not trusting or perhaps does not (yet) want what is promised. Only obedience that arises out of faith, hope and love gives God glory, for only that kind of obedience bears witness to the truth of who God actually is, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

God will continue to be gracious to us whether we receive or resist his grace. Of course part of his graciousness will be to resist our resistance to his grace! That's the nature of God's wrath as he says "No" to our "No" to him in order to reaffirm his "Yes" to us in Christ ([2 Corinthians 1:19](#)). And God's "No" is just as strong as his "Yes," because it is an expression of his "Yes." And yes, those who do resist God's grace will not experience the benefits of living by faith. However, they will not, by that unbelief, stop God from being true to himself; being gracious.

How then should we answer those who say that they can do whatever they like since we're under grace and not law? We should say that we're surprised they have such little understanding of grace! Living a lawless life, devoid of trust in God, is not receiving grace at all. Instead, it is resisting grace, refusing to live in it. Presuming upon grace is not receiving it but rejecting it. And few of its benefits will be experienced that way. As we disciple people in the way of Jesus, we should help them to not reject grace by misunderstanding or pridefully resisting it. We should exhort them to not presume upon grace. Instead we should help them live in the grace that God is extending to them right now. We should help them to know that no matter what they do; God will continue to be true to himself and true to his good purposes for them. We will help them to trust that because God loves them and because he is gracious in his own nature, character and purpose, he will resist our resistance to grace so that one day we might fully receive and thus live by his grace and so gladly take on all the joyful obligations of grace, knowing the privilege it is to be a child of God with Jesus Christ as our elder brother.

[1] An even worse explanation is that God wanted us to believe the falsehood that he wanted a conditional relationship with us, where we merited his favor, so that when we failed, which he knew we would, we would come to see that we couldn't merit it. Thus it turns out that he never did really want a conditional relationship with us although we were led to believe that he did.

[2] See for example Isaiah 1 and 66 and Hosea 4-14 for God's complaint about sacrifices given to God to appease him as if he were an idol.

[3] The idea of an inheritance conveys the same sort of understanding. The giving of an inheritance does not depend upon its reception. In fact it is given and so possessed in a certain way even before it is received. Found in the practices of Israel, the idea of an inheritance is used to speak of God's ultimate blessings at numerous key points in the New Testament. See [Galatians 3:18](#); [Ephesians 1:11](#); [Colossians 3:24](#); [Hebrews 9:15](#).

GCI principal website and Moncton Websites—a) www.gci.org, b) www.gcine Brunswick.org, c) www.gcicanada.ca;

For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace, and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website. Contact Information: Pastor's contact information: email—

evautour47@outlook.com