

Call to Obedience # 443
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Grace and Truth

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

This is probably one of the weightiest, most wonderful passages in the whole Bible because in this verse we have the **incarnation** of Christ, the **glorification** of Christ and the **fullness** of Christ.

Incarnation means that Spirit takes on human form. Jesus, in His human form, is called the Word with a capital W—it is His name, His title. Words are used for communication, so since Jesus' job title is "Word," we can see that Jesus, as Word of God, is the ultimate revelation, the clearest expression and the communication of God. In other words, Jesus is God's best word to man. That expression of God chose to enter a human body 2000 years ago and become human flesh. And He *dwelt among us*.

The verb "dwell" also means "to tabernacle," to take residence in or to live amongst. It is a reference to the Old Testament Tabernacle, the place which God told the children of Israel to build for Him. It was a tent made of animal skins and was known as *the place of meeting*: where God would meet with them and where they would meet with Him.

The whole nation of Israel camped around the Tabernacle each day. During the daytime, God showed His mercy by providing a cloud above Israel to shade them from the hot sun, and at night there was a pillar of fire above which provided warmth during the cold desert nights. God's presence met all of the needs of His people.

In the New Testament, Christ Jesus, in His own body, took the place of the old Tabernacle made with hands. The Person of Jesus, in His own body, became the new meeting place for man to meet with God and for God to meet with man. People who followed Jesus had all of their needs met.

When Jesus left to return to His Father, He sent the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His believers, to live inside of them and to represent Him. Thus, each Spirit-filled person is His new tabernacle and will have all of his needs met.

This is the new gospel, ...*which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Col. 1:27). This makes the Christian a supernatural being.

Now another aspect of this verse is the **glorification** of Christ. Let me repeat it: *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.* The ones who *beheld His glory* were Peter, James and John who went with Jesus to pray and witnessed His transfiguration on a high mountain. There His body became brilliantly white like the sun, and the apostles saw the glory which Jesus had before He came to live with them on earth (Matt. 17:2).

As they saw Jesus' glory, they observed two components within it: *grace and truth*. That is all! It says: *we beheld his glory... full of grace and truth*. We needed the transfiguration to show us the components of God's glory, to show the Church that God's glory is *full of grace and truth*. **The fullness of Christ is grace and truth.**

As an aside, think about what those disciples would have missed if they had skipped that prayer meeting! What if Peter had allowed himself to be offended and had quit when Jesus rebuked him harshly saying: ...*Get thee behind me, Satan...* (Matt. 16:23)? Peter had been chosen as the chief of the 12 disciples. He had forsaken all to follow Jesus and had the revelation that He was the Messiah, yet I believe this is the greatest rebuke that any man of God ever received in the entire history of the Church: *Get thee behind me, Satan*. Marvelous, oh how marvelous, it still did not make Peter skip prayer meeting!

My friends, sometimes God deals harshly with His choicest servants. Do not quit! If you stay with Him, even through painful corrections, it could be that soon He may show you something wonderful as was the case here: the next week Jesus took Peter with Him to the Mount of Transfiguration to behold His Glory.

Now, let us consider more specifically the words, *grace and truth*. Let us ask, "What is grace?" Well, I have looked at this in the Greek and the Hebrew texts and this is what I have found: the word "grace" is to be associated with graciousness, with kindness, with favor, with joy, with delight, and with sweetness. So, if we were to create a spiritual man called "Grace," those would be his organs: graciousness, kindness, favor, joy, delight and sweetness.

Dear ones, if you are followers of Jesus, the longer and deeper you go all for God, the more these two virtues will become embedded in every fiber of your being: *grace and truth*. So, if you see Christians who do not have these qualities

of grace, that means they are far from following Jesus even though they may be the greatest fanatics for His teachings. The Christians ought to be the sweetest, most gracious, kindest, humblest people on the face of the earth. Of course, we know that becoming gracious is a process. Peter prays for multiplied grace (and peace) to be given to his readers in all his epistles (2 Peter 1:2).

But, my friends, as important as grace is to all of us, truth is also very important. It is both *grace and truth* that make up the heavenly garment of our Lord. Just as a train needs a track, as a river needs two shores, so grace needs truth. It must be understood that divine grace never sacrifices truth for popularity.

Jesus never budged from the truth, He never compromised the truth, He never covered up or hid the truth. He lived for the truth and He preached the truth even though He lost many friends because of it. He stayed with the truth until the truth He held took Him to His crucifixion. Because, you see, HE, Himself, was the Truth, and is the Truth! Jesus says, I AM the Truth (John 14:6).

Sadly, already from early on, Christians had misinterpreted grace to mean tolerance of sin, as you may be able to discern from these words of Paul: *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid* (Rom. 6:1-2a). What Paul is saying here is that grace has boundaries to its kindness. It will not smile at sin. Absolutely not. It will not associate with sin.

We have the same problem in Christianity today as seen already in the early church: we like grace and we sing a lot of songs about grace, but we do not seem to want to have too much truth with it. Truth gets in our way! Similarly, we want to talk about love, love, love, but we do not want to talk about holiness. You see, holiness is the utmost expression of divine truth. Holiness does not run from truth but chases after it. What are you chasing after? The truth tells us that God is a holy God (there are about 600 references to holiness in the Bible) and the Bible is rightfully called The Holy Bible.

So, my dear friend, as an example, if you are living in a sexual relationship with a person to whom you are not married (you may even have previously had an experience with God), you are living in ungodliness: grace does not abound to you. What are you going to say on Judgment Day since the Bible says that without holiness, you shall not see the Lord? We need to live up to the truth! If you cohabit immorally, you live under the wrath of God which is revealed to all ungodliness (Rom. 1:18).

You see, the truth is important because truth convicts us, truth illuminates us about right and wrong, truth pricks our conscience, and then the truth causes us to repent of our evil ways. Grace then takes over: grace forgives us; grace cleanses us; and grace makes us new persons in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore, we need both truth and grace, and that is what Jesus is all about! That is where the glory is.

The Pharisees had truth without grace and because of that, they were hard and inflexible. The Corinthian Christians, as you read in Paul's epistles, believed a lot in grace, but they lacked knowledge of some great truth and commitment to it. Paul pled with these Corinthians, and therefore likewise with us, to clean up their lives and become a holy church, a tabernacle of His unending presence, *full of grace and truth*.

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

When Jesus was transfigured, three of His disciples saw His glory, *full of grace and truth*. Live so that *grace and truth* are revealed to you also someday.

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