

How is it going?

By B. D. Tate

We've been about understanding grace as what God has already done and given to us in Christ. We have understood that asking, seeking, and knocking has been fulfilled in us when we became born again. We have received the Holy Spirit and all that the Spirit is in Christ Jesus. **We know that being born again is huge taking us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear son—giving us His Name as in a VISA card.**

Acts 3: 16 **“And His name, through faith in His name,** has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

We know that faith is not some vague trust in God but is based and a product of knowing God's word. God's word is His will and that we are supposed to know God's will. We know that the atonement ***is a finished work*** that established for us forgiveness of sin and healing spiritually, mentally, and physically as an accomplished fact (1 Pet. 2:24); we know that righteousness as a gift has been given to us through the blood of Jesus (Rom. 5:17); we know now that we are no longer subject to the law of Moses but are to live to newness of life (Rom. 6:4). These truths and more have been taught here and the question I now ask is **“How is it going for you?”**

How is it going in your life? Do these truths make a difference for you in your everyday life? Are you

finding more peace, more power, more life, more freedom, and more health?

John 8: 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

32 "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Do you know the truth and is it setting you free? What good is it to know the truth if it is not affecting your life? In a way that would be like dangling a carrot in front of us motivating us to move but never actually getting to eat that prize. **This is like believing that God has healed us through the atonement but never actually experiencing healing. That would be like looking at the prize through a glass window but never being able to possess it—to break through the glass.** We ask but don't receive, we seek but do not find, and we knock and the door is not opened to us...*but what is telling us these things?* Sometimes the Christian walk can be very confusing, perplexing, or discouraging. We may even see others receiving the things of God's promises and wondering what is wrong with us?

In such cases it is very tempting to begin to change our believing or theology of the Christian **walk to reflect our experiences.** We take our lack, our failure, and our realities and begin to interpret the Word of God from them. This is what the church has done for many centuries and the result has been weakness, powerlessness, and ineffectiveness. When we let go of the things we do understand to accommodate the things we don't we all lose.

The Grace of God as amazing as it is to us is not a formula but ***is based upon our relationship to the Lord***. I may know the right things and even believe the right things but at the core of our Christian life ***is our personal intimacy with Jesus***. I may have the right seeds, the right fertilizer, good ground, and sun and water, ***but it is still God who yields the increase (1 Cor. 3:6)***. **The increase comes from our heart's openness to Jesus.**

I said that the Christian walk can be confusing and perplexing. I believe that is true especially when we try to live it with one foot in the kingdom of God and the other in this world. **When we mix things up we get mixed up.** At some point we need to evaluate some priorities. With any endeavor I need to *count the costs* so to speak to decide if my effort is worth the time, energy, focus, and work, to achieve that goal. I can't do everything but I can do a few things in my life well. It is true that some of us are *"Jack of all trades..."* yet the saying goes on to say, *"...and master of none."* We have to decide what matters to us and focus our attention, time, and energy to accomplish those goals. It is like deciding on marriage, when I find the right person and choose to marry, I am choosing to become single minded and focused on that one person. In truth we must become single minded in the things of God (James 1:8 & 4:8)!

When it comes to the kingdom of God and the Christian walk we are going to be very frustrated trying to live it part time. It may look good on paper that I have made this commitment or that to the church but what really matters ***is my personal life's commitment to walk spiritually minded***. Our results will reflect our focus in spiritual things as much as they do in natural things. I heard a well known master pianist say this about his work ethic,

“When I miss a day’s practice I know it; when I miss two days practice my wife knows it; when I miss three days of practice my audience knows it.” This is really true of spiritual things too.

How many of us can remember being involved with something very heavily but in time let it go? When we came back to it we found it distant, disconnected, or “rusty” as some might put it? In other words, at one time we were in tune, intimately in touch, practiced and ready to perform but after leaving it and coming back to it we were not so closely connected. We had to get back into it again to find our place, peace, and performance again. We had grown cold to it (hardened) and needed to soften our heart towards it again!

The Good Ole Golf Analogy!

I have related this before but it still fits well so I’ll share it again. When it comes to playing golf which I really enjoy doing, I don’t play every day. In fact most weeks I get out once. What happens over a period of time is that my game is up, then down, good, then bad, and that can happen in the same round. Sometimes I’ll have a day when all of my clubs are ready and I shoot par or less. I’d call it my “A” game day; however, most rounds are not like that they are a mixture of good shots, not so good shots and even bad ones. ***I have this tendency*** because I was a very good athlete to expect my “A” game every time I play which puts a lot of pressure on me. This is ridiculous of course but I don’t always make sense to myself. If I was playing golf for a living I’d be playing and practicing every day. Furthermore, I’d be thinking, meditating, and dreaming golf. You could say that for me to be successful in golf enough to make a living, win some

tournaments, and play like I would expect, **that I'd have to be about it twenty-four seven!** I am nowhere near that effort nor do I have the desire to be.

With that in mind then it becomes really unfair to think that I can expect the same results that professionals get or that someone else might get because at one time they did make golf their life.

When we consider the life of the apostles I think we'd all pretty much agree that they were living the Christian life as professionals—twenty-four, seven. When we consider brothers and sisters in the Lord who have had great ministries such as John Wesley, Billy Graham, Smith Wigglesworth, F. F. Bosworth, John G. Lake, or even a Joel Osteen, Joseph Prince, not to forget Andrew Wommack, these are ministers **who have made a decision to make their Christian walk their life.** So now my question becomes **is it fair to place the burden of having the same results on you as any one of these have had or are having?**

I have come to terms or peace with my golf game for the most part. I know that I'm not going to perform like I'd want to or feel potentially I should perform most of the time ***because I'm not committed to golf as a way of life.*** I play it part time, I think about it part time, I watch it, and I am somewhat familiar with how the game should be played. How fair is it for me to expect the same results, the same consistency, the same scores, as professionals get with my meagerly part time effort?

When it comes to your spiritual life what classification would you put it in? Is living the Christian life a full time, I give it

my all, it is my life, effort? Or would you consider your Christian walk more of a part time thing?

When I talk about our effort it seems that we immediately begin to think about our works—placing the burden of results on us. As with most Christian truths there is tension in what I'm addressing here. We walk by faith in God's grace which speaks to God's workmanship within us and what God has done in us through our born again experience; however, **the part we play is in making it our first priority and making it our focus.** We must pay attention, meditate, thinking on, dream about, and use our imagination seeing ourselves the way God sees us (doing the things Jesus said we'd do).

If our Christian life is like my golf game where I'd like to play to my potential but have no real desire to make golf my life, then we can begin to see some problems.

The question becomes why would I want my Christian walk to become my life?

What if I don't desire it that much? What if I have other things I'd rather be about? I think if we are honest without condemnation or judgment being brought to bear, we might realize where we are in relation to what it takes from us to have the same results that Jesus said we'd have.

Eph 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that works in us,**

As this verse and many others point out God’s grace is dependent upon our personal focus. God has subjected His kingdom working in our Christian walk **to us**. It is according to the power that works in us. That is to say, ***“It is how much I want it and how much I make it my life.”***

What many Christian teachers, preachers, and ministers of the gospel do is take the lack of results and re-interpret the Word of God to explain it. Instead of us looking at my golf game and saying, “Well, if you want the same results as professionals then make the same effort...” instead what we hear is, “Hey it isn’t your fault, it’s not for you to have those kinds of results, you are not gifted enough, and it is not for everyone to perform like professionals. God called them, not you. God decided to make them professionals and for you to do other things.” I speak this way as an analogy only not to condemn anything or anyone.

Immediately some are going to feel guilty for not having the same results and would rather return to the understanding that God decides and is in control. This takes all of it off of us that God’s sovereignty means that we have no part to play—it is all predetermined. I believe this is where Satan wants us in neutral and unwilling to press into spiritual things.

This is where the Christian walk is perplexing because we often think in either/or scenarios. We tend to think it is one way or the other and when we do we remove the tension that God placed in scripture for our benefit. God is sovereign and has predetermined or decided how things are and how they work. In being sovereign He decided to give man dominion that is the authority to rule. At no time did God ever give us ***the power***

outside of Himself to rule—except natural power. The power to rule comes from the Holy Spirit. Jesus put this way,

Lu 11:20 “But if I cast out demons **with the finger of God**, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

We have the dominion, the right to rule, but it was always through the Holy Spirit that dominion was to be exercised. When Adam fell we lost connection to the power of dominion because we lost connection to the Holy Spirit. Now that Jesus has restored our connection our power to exercise dominion in His name has also been restored. Nevertheless, it is according to the power that works in us!

What we have now is amazing if we can grasp it.

One of the problems is convincing our hearts that God’s grace is not like the ways of the world. In the world we have to earn it to deserve it. In the world we are barrowing, burdening, and limited in our access to what we need. There is only so much food, so much gas, so much service, so much tolerance from others. Love is conditional and we can fall from it. Grace from God is not dependent upon earthly resources or strengths. Grace from God is not burdensome to Him as if we are bothering Him, inconveniencing Him, or depleting His assets. Furthermore, grace from God is not based upon our efforts **but the efforts of the Son of God.**

It is according to the power that is energized in us! It is according to what we believe about God. If we believe we are a burden to Him we limit the power working or energized in us. If

we believe God is judging us for our sins we limit the power of God working or energizing in us.

Can we believe that God has already decided to deal with us as He deals with His own Son? Can we accept that we are accepted in the beloved? Can we trust that God is not put out but is energized within Himself and is satisfied, fulfilled, fed, and overjoyed to have ***poured out His love*** and given us abundance of grace?

{Consider this: God is not examining us anymore; the law has been fulfilled in Christ. The Old Testament foreshadows this truth when God set up the sacrificial system and the priesthood to cover sins. When someone brought a sacrifice to the priest to be offered for sins, the priest did not examine the one who brought the sacrifice. **The priest examined the sacrifice**. The law required unblemished healthy and whole animals to be offered which represented the perfection of the true Lamb of God—Jesus. Blemished animals, ones that had been injured, maimed, diseased, and lame, were rejected. **The priest never examines the one offering the sacrifice**. It is understood that the one offering the sacrifice is guilty; however, if the sacrifice itself is unblemished then the one offering it was to lay their hands upon that animal and by doing this a transfer took place. The sins of the one offering the sacrificed passed to the unblemished animal and the innocence of the animal passed to the one offering it. Likewise, in Christ God has transferred our sins to Him and His righteousness to us!}

We think we are taxing God, putting Him out, being a bother, and being a burden to God just by existing let alone needing things, needing food, shelter, clothing, money to pay bills, and/or healing to restore our health. This is coming to us from wrong thinking. We are looking at God as if we were looking

at our earthly parents, or earthly authorities, a boss, an owner we must deal with...this is absolutely wrong in this sense.

Or in some ways we are looking at God as if He were a hireling who doesn't care about the sheep. We look at God as if He is busy and we are taking Him away from what He really wants to do. We do this because this is what we do and what we've experienced from others.

Jesus said I am the good shepherd:

John 10: 10 "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

11 **"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.**

12 "But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

13 **"The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.**

14 "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

15 "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

God is not watching another TV show, waiting to go to the store, and preparing to go on a vacation, or looking to finish a project before paying attention to us. ***He is not like our earthly relationships that have all let us down or given us the wrong impression of God.*** God created us for His pleasure and as this passage describes for His devotion; we are His sheep and His desire is for us to receive His love. He wants us to see how lovely, how beautiful, and how perfect His expression of love is.

It brings rest, comfort, joy, and pleasure **TO HIM** for us to receive from Him again and again. He is not giving us crumbs from the master's table, He is giving us from His table a banquet, food to overflowing, more than enough, and it is called **abundant grace!**

Ro 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, **much more those who receive abundance of grace** and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

God is not the "god of little" but of abundance. God supplies and gives grace to the humble. God not only gives but lavishes love, benefits, provides wisdom, protection, provision and His presence because it brings Him joy for us to embrace it. Even when we look at the sun and how big and how powerful our solar system's energy source is, we know it is decaying and will one day burn out. ***That is the way of all natural things***, and because we have ***a natural mind set***, having fallen into sin, we see God that way to. Stop living naturally and live to the supernatural born again spirit within us! Live by faith in God's Word that is eternal ever living, upholding all things, and has been given to us.

Grace and Peace are Multiplied to Us through the Knowledge of Jesus—the Word of God.

If I know a little bit about golf it will benefit me a little bit. If I know a lot about God's word then it will benefit me a lot. In fact, grace and peace will be multiplied to me *not just added!* We need grace and peace to find our way in faith. Faith produces peace and rest in our hearts towards God and His will. These

things are vital for our living well upon the earth and finding results.

Christ becomes of no effect: by staying under the law!

What prevents us from accepting embracing or receiving God's grace? Ignorance of God's word certainly prevents and hinders grace into our lives as much as not knowing how to play golf would hinder our performance on a golf course. What makes the things of God ineffective in our life? Certainly it would be limited by our focus and attention; but what makes us fall from grace? Most of us would agree that sin is the problem. We would argue that unbelief and doubt keep us from faith and embracing the truth and that would be true. **Yet, the scriptures point to one particular issue of life that keeps the grace of God from flowing in our life more than any other.** Listen to this verse:

Ga 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, **you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**

It is by judging according to the flesh **and having a natural mindset based in and from the Law of Moses that is estranging us from Christ! It is by thinking naturally and judging based upon earthly reasoning. We are under law when we think naturally! This is a furious battleground for our faith (II Cor. 10:5)! Remember this verse:**

Isa 26:3 **You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You,** Because he trusts in You.

Furthermore it is by trying to earn God's blessing, earn God's favor, trying to prove we are worthy of His grace that is causing us to fall from it. God is the giver of life and all that we

have we have received. There is nothing that has been created that God didn't create therefore, understand that we exist by and at His command **and for His pleasure**. When we try to justify or excuse; when we try to compare ourselves with others these things cause us to make Christ to no affect in our life. We are living under the law that exposes our lack of God's love. Jesus said, "*Judge not; lest you be judged*" (Matt. 7:1). We have the liberty to stop judging and put on the mind of Christ!

God's abundant grace has already been given in Christ and Christ became ours when we became born again. What stops us from the flow of God's abundance is our own justifications and **natural minded thinking**. When we start trying to justify our worthiness of His blessings through works of our own we fall from grace. It is not sin itself but the sin of self righteousness that prevents our receiving. We think that now that we are God's children it is our chores so to speak to keep the law as best we can but that was not the reason the law was given. When we continue to be dominated by worldly wisdom and ways of man we are falling from grace.

We Were Made to Receive!

It is often pride that keeps us from receiving from others let alone God. It takes humility to allow others to serve us. For us to think that God is serving us that is hard on our sense of sin consciousness. **God wants to serve us?** We should be groveling at His feet. We should be begging, fearful of His wrath, so intimidated that we wouldn't dare to look upon Him. What kind of God is this that wants to supply us, sustain us, and always love us?

Consider this God: When God is kind He is not weak; when God is just He is not hard. When God loves He is not soft; when God is merciful He is not overlooking anything or anyone. God is sovereign, holy, and righteous who deserves all worship, adoration, and praise with thanksgiving, but who as Jesus said, ***“Did not come to be served; but to serve.”*** This hasn’t changed! Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). The king is also the servant? Yes, God who is almighty is the sustainer of all life. His love is compelled to supply, to lavish, to pour on, to give and give again! He is the giver we are the receivers! We can only give back what we have received! It is not a vending machine situation but God desires sons and daughters...who will return His love.

Continuing in Sin keeps us under the law and hardens our hearts toward God’s supply

It is like a candle making process where the wick is dipped into the melted wax. As each dip takes place and the wax is allowed to dry there are layers of wax upon wax building up. As we continue in sin and do not repent our hearts grow insensitive, cold, and distant from God’s heart. God hasn’t changed His decisions to love and save us but we have move away in our heart. We can reverse this by changing the way we do business. By becoming obedient in our faith and believing the right things our heart becomes more sensitive towards the things of the Spirit.

By continuing to sin we are sowing to the flesh as this verse teaches:

Gal. 6: 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; **for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**

8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Under grace we have to empowerment to be free from the law of sin and death:

Ro 6:14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.**

Grace is greater than sin as much as the Son of God is greater than the written law!

When Christ offered Himself upon the cross he bore the sin of all mankind forever (Heb. 10:14). The law's judgment against mankind's sin was placed upon Him and He took all of it satisfying God's wrath against us. Old Testament sacrifices **were consumed and burned away leaving nothing behind** indicating that the judgment was greater than the sacrifice; however in Jesus, after He had suffered, bled and died, He rose again! **His sacrifice purged our sins from us but it did not consume or burn him to oblivion.** Jesus the Son of God was greater than the punishment, greater than the law's judgment, and greater than God's wrath against sin bringing about the fulfillment that mercy and love are greater than judgment (James 2:13).

Where sin abounds grace much more abounds delivering us from the bondage of sin that was empowered by the law. We are no longer under the law for Christ fulfilled the law and then redeemed us from it (Gal. 3:13). Now we are under grace **but**

more important is to realize that we have gone from relating to regulations and statutes **to relating to the Son of God.**

John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, **but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Which brings me back to this foundation that grace is **more than** a formula or an impersonal credit card **it is the personal and intimate relationship we have with the Lord. It is this relationship that transforms us** and brings about victory over sin. **It is seeing Jesus, beholding His glory as in a mirror within us that transforms us from glory to glory into the same image:**

2Co 3:18 But we all, with unveiled face, **beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory,** just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

This is the truth: that as we relate to, cultivate our spiritual life, fellowship with Christ, seek that kingdom of God born into us by His Spirit, see, behold, worship, and praise Him in our hearts, **transformation takes place in us as we do.** We will find our spirit man filled with peace and our fears cast away, our doubts diminished, our unbelief burned away like chaff.

This means that our Christian walk becomes our life—as we behold Him! The life of Christ becomes stronger in our thoughts, speech, and imaginations, as we become consumed by faith in God’s grace.

Conclusion: What prevents us from walking this walk?

It is because we don’t know Him. It is because we have not beheld Him in us but have only seen Him at a glance. We have had

our moments and as many have testified those moments are so unspeakable and full of glory we don't want them to end. ***We have focused on worldly things because our mind and heart's affections have been dominated by them.*** Yet, we can cultivate and experience the richness of His presence, the fullness of His joy, the peace that passes all understanding and become full, intoxicated if you will, by the Holy Spirit. In this place, in our heart, grace and truth manifest in our mortal bodies (II Cor. 4:10, 11) bringing about peace, rest, comfort, trust, love, faith, joy...***all of which are products of beholding the Lord.*** Worship means seeing the Lord; worship means beholding His glory in us. **Worship then becomes the vehicle of transformation.** As we see the Lord high and lifted up within our being **we will experience newness of life.** This grace leads us to dominion in His name and to see Him as He is.

We Can Tell When...

You know we can all tell when an athlete has dedicated his/her life to their sport. We can see the skills and consistency, the power and finesse; we see the performance as one who has fine tuned their talent. Also we can see that someone has weeded, planted, planned, and kept a beautiful landscape or flower garden. We don't have to be present when the athlete worked out, practiced, and pursued their dream; or the gardener weeds and maintains their work. ***We see the fruit of it.***

Likewise, for any of the promises of God, for Christ to be seen in and through us, for the grace of the born again experience ***to transform us, we need to cultivate and spend time in worship, praise, thanksgiving, and returning the love of God.*** Our faith is

based upon our knowledge (personal and intimate knowledge) of Jesus, and our peace depends upon our **dependence upon the Spirit**. If we are not seeing results that Jesus said we'd see **then we are not beholding the Lord in His grace enough**. Faith is the **by-product of seeing Jesus in His grace in us—seeing His intercession**.

This isn't works as in I'm responsible to make things happen; **this is energy towards the One who does make things happen**. We aren't working for the results; it is because of the results in Christ that we are working. We are not seeking His righteousness any longer we have found Jesus, **now we are paying more and more attention to the glorious one within us**. As we see Jesus so are we in this world (1 John 4:17). This verse reveals this truth:

2Co 4:10 "always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, **that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body**."

We begin by living to Christ more. This is what changes our desires. The trick isn't to die to sin first but to live to Jesus first. If we walk after the Spirit we won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). Live to grace and truth in Him, see Him, and the things of this world will grow strangely dim. We have had it backwards trying to make ourselves more like Him by denying the world, practicing righteous things, and putting away lustful desires, even trying to deny ourselves. This was like trying to put the cart before the horse. This has failed us because the strength of the law keeps us in bondage to the old nature. When we see Jesus and live to Him in us **the power of the law is broken**, sin no longer has dominion over us, and we are free to love Him back. In

this relationship of grace and truth in Jesus ***we are transformed***, we see results, and we do the works that Jesus said we'd do (John 14:12). ***Transformation takes place each and every time we see the Lord***, experience His love, joy, peace, and rest. Every time we find comfort in God's Word it is faith at work in us coming to us from Jesus!

Acts 3: 16 "**And His name, through faith in His name**, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. **Yes, the faith which comes through Him** has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Amen.