

Grace News Today



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“Faith Alone in Christ Alone”

We extend our warmest greetings to you upon our return from a very successful missionary trip to Kenya. As of this writing, a United Kingdom mission is in progress. We stand humbled at the many prayer partners that Our Heavenly Father has provided (all of you) who offer requests, relentlessly, on our behalf. We are thankful for your financial support in order to fulfill the command of the Great Commission...making disciples and spreading His good news, the grace gospel of faith alone in Christ alone. We have so much to be thankful for, and this newsletter details just a small portion of what God has done to bring glory to Himself.

"Riches and honor are {hidden in Bible doctrine}...For he who finds {sound Bible Doctrine} finds {the fountain of} life, and obtains favor from the Lord. But he who sins {refuses to give perception and application of Bible doctrine the highest priority} injures himself, and those who hate {doctrine} love death" (Proverbs 8:18, 35-36).

My friend, what's your PRIORITY? I have pondered over this, mulled it within, and readjusted my thinking—a day-to-day battle in the world of surmounting distractions. And you too may wish to ponder and meditate, for eternity is nearer than when we first believed!

We hope you are enjoying our newly redesigned newsletter with it's easy to read two column format. Our goal is for you to quickly find any information you are looking for. This month we are even including a table of contents so reference information will be right at your fingertips. Before we delve into our study let us remember 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all

unrighteousness.' Now we are in fellowship and on "teaching ground." "You Shall Know the Truth, and the Truth Shall Set You Free" (John 8:32)

DOCTRINE OF GRACE

KING DAVID A Symphony of God's Grace
DAVID'S HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
(Cont'd from vol. 35) 2004 © Rev. Moses C. Onwubiko

In our study, in Volume 35, if you will remember, Orpah had just kissed her mother-in-law [good-bye], but Ruth clung to her. Then Orpah said, 'Behold, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and her gods, return after your sister-in-law [and to your own gods as well].' But Ruth said, 'Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; **for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. 'Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the Lord do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me.'**" (Ruth 1:8-17). Let's refresh our minds in light of what we have examined so far. We saw how God in His infinite grace made a remarkable grace overture to Rahab—the lowest classed woman in Jericho—in that she was a former prostitute. In addition to that, we pointed out that Rahab was David's great-grandmother, in the lineage of the King of kings, Lord of lords, namely, our Savior Jesus Christ.

What a remarkable lady! But that's not all! While in Bethlehem, Ruth put her trust in Yahweh as the only true God who caused her to be at the right place at the right time to meet Boaz whose field she gleaned as a widow, though she had never met him. Advantageously, Boaz, a close relative to Elimelech, had the rights, according to Mosaic Law, to be a kinsman redeemer and marry Ruth. But alas, Rahab, Boaz's mother, was a former **prostitute** in pagan Jericho (Joshua 2:1; Matthew 1:5). Boaz had a son through Ruth, named Obed, and Obed fathered Jesse. (Continued on page 2)

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David's Historical Background (Continued from page 1)
That's right, you read it correctly! And who is Jesse? Jesse is King David's father! Providentially, the great-grandparents of the royal Messianic line had roots outside Israel. And more than that, how fitting, that our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of David, descended from such a **lowly family**—a heathen, whose copulation with the son of a prostitute (Boaz) resulted in the lineage of our wonderful Savior. Who would have thought that? What a marvelous sense of humor our Father has. What a *clear* graphic picture of God's amazing GRACE!

DAVID—THE SHEPHERD BOY

Generally, a shepherd is one who is employed to **tend**, **guard**, and **feed** sheep. His equipment consisted of a knapsack made of goat's skin with the legs tied off in order to tote food and other articles. He usually carried a sling to protect himself and the sheep against wild animals. A rod (stick) about 30 inches long with a knob on one end was a necessary item in a shepherd's inventory. The shepherd's staff looks like a walking cane, usually with a crook on one end. He carried a flute made of reeds to entertain himself and to calm his sheep which he knew by name, and they knew his voice. He saw that they were all safe in the fold at night.¹ This befits David—the shepherd boy. In this description, we see the backbone of a good shepherd, namely, tending, feeding, and guarding. We will attempt to analyze these three elements since they cast light on David's mental attitude.

Ironically, our Lord Jesus Christ brought these three words (tend, feed, and guard) to focus when He met Peter at the Sea of Galilee where Peter and some of our Lord's disciples were fishing. In John the apostle's account, we read, "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love [*agapao*] Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love [*phileo*] You.' He said to him, '**Tend** [*bosko*] my lambs [baby sheep].' He said to him again, the second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love [*phileo*] You.' He said to him, '**Shepherd** [*poimaino*= involves the whole office of the shepherd, guarding, folding of the flock as well as leading it to nourishment] My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love [*phileo*] Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love [*phileo*] Me?' And he said to Him, 'You know all things [appealing to the Lord's omniscience]; You know that I love [*phileo*] You.' Jesus said to him, '**Tend** My sheep.'" (John 21:15-17). A handful of commentaries, with varying views, have been written on the above three

verses. It's not my intention to attack any commentary; however, by God's grace, I wish to shed light on them, as the principles apply to every believer particularly to pastors.

The Lord deliberately selected His words in John 21:15-17 to teach Peter and all of us a valuable lesson. I believe the Lord had three groups of believers in mind (the baby, the adolescent, and the mature or adult believer) when He addressed the apostle Peter. And He used each verb accordingly! He mentioned virtues or unselfish love twice, that's '*agapao*', the strongest love, which is totally devoid of emotion. The emphasis is always on the integrity of the lover and never on its object. Quite frankly, the object of the one who has virtue love can be obnoxious in nature, but it wouldn't make any difference. And finally, He used personal love, that's '*phileo*,' which has an emotional connotation—a rapport kind of love. And in such love as this, the integrity of the object is always in view and navigates the direction of the love and controls its duration. It's based on a mutual reciprocation of respect, admiration, and integrity of the lovers. You scratch my back, and I'll scratch your back type of love. And so, it is time to begin dissecting those three elements of a good shepherd that we've spread before you: Tend, Guard, and Feed.

TEND: A baby sheep or lamb needs all the tender care or attention he can receive. He cannot feed himself and usually is very frail when he walks, or when he needs to run in case of an attack. Similarly, a human baby needs someone to hold his hands and guide him to take his first step. He is likely to fall if he's allowed to stand on his own. It requires patience and virtue love to deal with their inadequacies and shortcomings! They are ever ready to be where you don't want them to be, go where you don't want them to go, and do things you don't want them to do. They are babies! With this in mind, the Lord called Peter's attention to this dynamic virtue love, if he were to be successful in caring for baby (lambs or) believers. It's tantamount to spiritual adulthood.

Acquiring this unique love takes time and training of the right lobe with the grace assets of Bible doctrine and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. As the believer lubricates his soul with truth, sooner or later he will see himself as the most wretched and most graced-out believer on the face of the earth! Conversely, the believer's recollection and cognizance of God's mercy and grace toward him while he was a baby believer would compel him to treat other baby believers in kind. As for David, the shepherd boy, his spiritual life accelerated rather quickly as he tended his father's flock! And his shepherding experience laced with humility and grace-orientation would serve as a buffer in his future career as Israel's finest king.

GUARD: "...Simon, son of John, do you [*agapao*] Me?.... 'Shepherd [*poimaino* =Guard = involves the whole office of

¹ Tenney Merrill: The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary: Zondervan Publishing House (1964), 599

the shepherd, guarding, folding of the flock as well as leading it to nourishment—shepherd] My Sheep.’ This is a stronger word than ‘tend’. And whom does the Lord have in mind when He employed this word? Obviously the adolescent believers! They are the most difficult to deal with it—very stubborn in every sense of the word. Sometimes, it requires a little knock of correction with the shepherd’s staff to keep them from injuring themselves. If you leave adolescent sheep for a moment, they wander off in different directions, making it harder for their shepherd to keep them in place. Often, the chore of guarding them can be very frustrating! It requires virtue love to deal with them—in grace of course. It gives a shepherd the opportunity to display his poise under pressure!

This is also true of life in general, especially in a local church. The adolescent believer in his arrogance has the potential to draw a shepherd or a believer to his level, if the shepherd does not possess virtue love or he may have it but not in a vigilant mode. That’s why the Lord underscored the importance of acquiring *agapao* love as a shepherd or a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And no question about it, in the course of David’s spiritual growth, he attained *agapao* love which was a necessary ingredient in his vocation as a shepherd. It’s a major and precious component that marked him out from the rest of his peers. And how did he get there? **GRACE!** “For who regards you as superior? And what do you have [including virtue love] that you did not receive? But if you did receive it [and you did], why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (I Corinthians 4:7). We are ready for the next verb: To tend.

FEED [TEND]: The Lord employed the same word He used when He first asked Peter whether he loved Him. But this time, He used a different kind of love, *phileo*. He asked, ‘Do you *phileo* Me?’ ‘Tend My sheep,’ He asserted. Why this sudden change? You would agree with me that being in the company of mature believers is like a trip to Paradise! Their conversation is always seasoned with salt, full of grace-orientation, humility, and testimonies that call for praise to the most High God. Above all, they are teachable, eager to learn new doctrines—always waiting to be fed! These are sheep that recognize their shepherd’s voice. Fellowship with them is nothing but friendly or an outburst of *phileo* love!

As David cared for his father’s sheep, he began to love them, even putting his own life in danger to rescue them from the danger of prey. And thus when King Saul asked him what credentials would qualify him to go to war with Goliath, he replied, “...Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me,

I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear....” (I Samuel 17:34-36). What a young lad with astonishing confidence in his God! Above all, his intake of God’s Word through parental teaching, dreams, angelic and other means available to him was the only BOOSTER he needed to excel in his spiritual life. Perhaps with the exception of the apostle Paul, David had an unparalleled comprehension of God’s grace more than anyone in human history. The humorous thing about David is that his spiritual failures were unequal; but on the other hand God met his failures with unsurpassed grace. It’s mesmerizing! We can hardly wait to investigate his failures—with reverence of course!! With this in view, let’s first review eleven basic principles:

- ❖ Grace reflects God’s character and policy both in eternity past, the present, and eternity future.
- ❖ Because of God’s immutability, His grace policy is totally undiminished.
- ❖ Your past failures, present, and future were thoroughly known by God in eternity past. That means your failures in time cannot surprise God—it can only shock you or your brethren!
- ❖ In time immemorial, God factored in and computed your failures, past, present, and future into His Database for His overall plan for your life.
- ❖ When it comes to spiritual failure, each believer, no matter what his spiritual level, is capable of committing any sin that is committable! David learned that lesson firsthand. He couldn’t believe that he was capable of doing what he did to an innocent couple—Uriah and Bathsheba. David committed adultery with his wife and murdered her husband! My question is this, what other sins, after salvation, could you commit that could surpass David’s despicable acts?
- ❖ And so, your failures as a believer cannot change God’s grace policy or His plan for your life. They can delay, and draw maximum discipline from the Bar of Eternal Justice. Case in point: When I was eleven years old, my spiritual vocation as God’s servant was made clear; and like Jonah, I went in the opposite direction to pursue medicine. After an awful and unbearable thirteen years of intensified discipline, as a result of disobedience to God’s will for my life, the Lord finally pushed and dragged me to where He planned for me to be, and to do what He wanted me to do. But not without the price of many bruises! Like my brother, Dr. Chinyere Onwubiko, the Pastor of Berean Bible Church, in Mississippi put it: If God asks you to jump, ask Him, “Lord how high?” That’s to say, when God speaks, all human debates and excuses are over! In other words, He will make you jump, either joyfully or painfully. He is Sovereign! Don’t you ever forget that!
- ❖ To that effect, there’s no amount of failure on our part that can cancel or supercede the riches of God’s

unconquerable grace. David was a master of this valuable lesson.

- ❖ What we know from Scripture is that each believer in the Old Testament, both great and small, had a measure of failure in their spiritual life.
- ❖ Sin is sin—no matter how little—it ruptures our fellowship with God and can only be recovered when 1 John 1:9 is applied.
- ❖ We must reject the temptation to make other believers' failures the object of our amusement—it's arrogant—it's evil—it's a sign of spiritual babyhood. And discipline often ensues!
- ❖ And finally, but not lastly, when you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ are walking in God's light and you suddenly fail—no matter what the frequency or intensity, get back into fellowship, isolate the guilt that goes with your failure, and move forward, onward to where sorrow and God's grace meet.

Before we proceed, it's fitting to ask an important question to stimulate our minds regarding the dynamic power of grace: Of all the finest genealogies in the world, why did God send His Uniquely born Son through a mediocre genealogy that was traced back to David, an adulterer and a murderer; to Bathsheba, David's kidnapped wife, and all the way to the former notorious prostitute—Rahab? A self-righteous believer would likely be angry with God's choice, and probably say, "David and Rahab do not deserve eternal life, let alone to be in the genealogy of our Messiah!" But such an attitude would inevitably collide with the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself: "...It is not those who are well [self righteous ones] who need a physician [grace overture], but those who are [sickened like David, Rahab, and others like them] (Luke 5:31)." On top of that, 'I have not come to call the [self] righteous but sinners [to change their mind about Me and anchor their faith alone in Me alone as their Savior]' (v. 32).

Paradoxically, it's the bi-product of self-deception to harbor a thought that you are better than David and Rahab. Let me ask you, do you really think that you are better than these graced-out believers? Oh no, you are not! Just because you've not been guilty of their brand of sin does not make you holier. If you maintain that you are more righteous, then you've disqualified yourself and would no longer be the object of God's grace overtures. It's that simple! We have alluded to this before, but let me be point blank: When you operate in self-absorption and egocentrism, when you think that you are better than anyone else, or sit on a pedestal and turn up your nose to others, it's regrettable to say that you are committing the **WORST SIN** of all—**ARROGANCE**—the sin that cost Satan and his cohorts a permanent place with God in heaven—a sin that's guaranteed to have a head-on collision with God's justice!

No question about it, some of us are like the self-righteous, self-centered and egotistic Pharisee who prayed to God from his arrogant heart, saying, "**God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people:** Swindlers, unjust, adulterers [like King David], even like this tax collector who was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven {like me because his sin is so great}, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me {shower me with your oasis of grace—I am a nefarious sinner!}'" (Luke 18:13)]. [As for me—the Pharisee] I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all I get [I am so righteous—these are my reasons why *you* should answer my prayer right now!]" (18:11, 12). What a blind, malodorous, and self-righteous man this Pharisee was—a stinker! Of course, we know the Lord's stance on both prayers: "I tell you, this man [the unworthy one] went down to his house justified rather than the other [self-absorbed Pharisee]; for everyone [without exceptions] who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (v.14). That's the truth of Scripture! That's the Supreme Court verdict! When you think that you are better or superior to others, when you puff yourself up in any way, sooner or later, God will yank you down in a hurry! And you alone will bear the horrendous and insufferable pain! God's justice guarantees it! And don't ever forget that fact as long as we are trapped in this body of sin, we will continue to be spiritually weary and need to humbly stoop down and drink without ceasing from the Fountain of His Grace everyday—today—tomorrow and into eternity!

Statistically, when you take a glance at what's happening in Christianity today, you'll be shocked to see people we have written off as eternal life material! That's not all! Many would be stunned to see some believers whom they thought were not living the spiritual life receiving their decorations! On the other hand, these self-elevated spiritual winners would be bowled over to find that they themselves are the losers! My friend, don't wait till then to find out whether you'll be among the winners or losers. You can take time right now, by going through your life with the toothpicks of God's Word, re-examining your own life—and stop wasting time examining other people's lives! That's God's prerogative! That's His job! The truth of the matter is that when you spend your time monitoring other people's lives, you'll loose your spiritual balance and place yourself on the pedestal of self-righteousness and arrogance! Doctrinally speaking, it's a precarious place to sit in God's Courtroom! But do you know what? That's exactly where the majority of believers are sitting today—judging side-by-side with God. What a dubious boldness! You have the right to ask yourself if you're on a self-righteous pedestal. And truly speaking, only the believers on pedestals would react to God's choice of people to be in our Lord's genealogy: King David and his kidnapped wife, Bathsheba, and David's great grandmother—Rahab. What a line-up!

Notwithstanding, God's ultimate promotion of King David, Bathsheba, and Rahab was a reflection of His great sense of humor. This was God's way of saying to you, "[Get your nose out of My business!] For My thoughts are not your thoughts [of legalism], neither are your ways My ways," declared the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways [of abundant grace] higher than your ways [of lordship salvation and legalism], and My [compassionate] thoughts [full of mercy] than your thoughts [of lack of grace-orientation]" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Sadly enough, it boils down to this: no matter how we slice it, legalistic believers cry out, "David and Rahab are not worthy to partake in the genealogy of the Bright Morning Star!" These believers who inadvertently operate in carnality—out of fellowship—will be busy reporting to the Lord who is unworthy of eternal life let alone to serve in Your Kingdom. Such atrocious assertions will be firmly met with God's stout response: "I have made him worthy!" And if that doesn't quench the thirst of your anger and bitterness toward God for promoting a down-to-earth person, God in his marvelous sense of humor can say to you, "Watch this: Not only have I made him worthy, I will also elevate him beyond measure!" That's what grace is all about—elevating a scum like King David to a place of honor! Therein lies the manifesto of grace at its highest peak!

No question about it, this Bible exposition will present a great challenge to everyone whose right lobe is still guided with a rudder of arrogance and legalism—the anti-spiritual life regulator. I don't know where we get the idea, that we are worthy even after our salvation to merit anything of intrinsic good from God. The bad news is that we don't have any merit of our own—even after our salvation—that's exactly what the Bible teaches! All our merits are tapped from the pipeline of Christ's merits! *Vive la difference* (herein lies the difference, as a Frenchman would say)! That's the truth I am endeavoring to convey to all of us!

We have delineated the apostle Paul's comment in his unsaved state in our first installment of this account, but let's reiterate: "It's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am **foremost** of all" (I Timothy 1:15). At this junction, we wish to pose an important question: Was the apostle, after he was saved ever found in a celebratory banquet for sinless believers? No! No, he wasn't even near the banquet hall! But, I wonder who else might still be there? One thing I know for sure is that the apostle was nowhere nearby. Rather, the echo of his voice was heard from afar—from the spiritual battle field, crying, "For that which I am doing [now that I am saved] I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do [as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ]. For I know that

nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of good is not. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free [Greek: *Rhuomai* = *snatch out of danger with a force, or to liberate—set me free*] from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:15, 18, 24). "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord [who has set me free from the eternal consequence of sin]!" (v. 25a). And so with a sense of his own destiny he thundered, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus [!]" (8:1). Invariably, daily deliverance from sin comes, not through legalistic effort, but through our Lord Jesus Christ. But admittedly, it's a tug-of-war (Galatians 5:16)!

The issue of whether the apostle Paul is describing a believer or an unbeliever's experience in Romans 7 has been hotly debated for centuries. However, when the text is thoroughly examined it becomes apparent that his description depicts a believer in Christ. This is not our subject to deal with; nonetheless, what Paul wrote in regard to his struggles after his conversion should never be misconstrued as an attempt to escape moral responsibility, but a statement of the great control sin can have over a believer's life. So, if you can be honest with yourself, you will agree that the Apostle Paul's description fits you perfectly. In light of this, there's a strong need to re-emphasize that God has never, and will never in the future, use anyone on the basis of the individual's merits! Put simply, you and I will NEVER be successful in our spiritual lives until we completely overhaul the chambers of our souls and detach ourselves from the spirit of arrogance through the consistent use of God's provisional grace tools, namely, the Holy Spirit and the 'sword of the Spirit'—the infallible Word of God. And we must always be vigilant to combat arrogance whenever it rears its ugly head, or else it will rob us of our blessings in time and in eternity and expose us to the wrath of God's Eternal justice!

Believers in all generations erroneously think that arrogance can easily be spotted on others. That's a scary assumption. The bad news is that it can't be easily recognized, for Satan, who invented it is the master of disguise. The apostle Paul brought his disguise to light when he lambasted the Corinthian believers for their arrogance, and thus we read, "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14). The truth of the matter is that arrogance comes in a disguised form that often fools the believer who functions under its influence. That's why the apostle Paul issued this somber warning: "**Therefore let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall**" (I Corinthians 10:12). You and I ought to take this warning to heart. Let me draw a line here _____: By and large, legalistic believers shall always be guilty of the sin of arrogance. We've talked so much about legalism—the **Master distorter** of salvation or spiritual life that we think it's time to iron out the remaining wrinkles. It's essential that

we first examine the doctrine of legalism. This deviation is necessary in that it will expose our dark side and perhaps cause us to pursue with all diligence the mental attitude of David that brought him closer and closer to God as he recognized his inadequacies and shortfalls on par with God's righteous standard. And so we are ready to examine the subject.

LEGALISM AT LARGE: The conservative Protestants or evangelical denominations have used this word so extensively in pulpits, in Christian magazines and literature, on the radio and television or wherever they have an audience that it's no longer a strange word to many of us. Generally, people use it to contrast grace. In fact, some denominations and churches have been tagged as being legalistic because of their doctrines or simply by the way their church operations are set up. Almost everyone in the evangelical arena goes to the extreme in accusing a denomination of being legalistic and vis-à-vis. But the truth of the matter is that legalism disguises itself so well that it can hide in every denomination behind many disguises. So many believers worship God in total blindness of the true meaning and ramification of legalism in the spiritual race. And so we are poised to define it in a very simple way.

Legalism as it is used in Christendom, in layman's terms, is rather a lengthy definition, but needed in order to throw some light on it. **Legalism is an enslavement of one's will with a quagmire of taboos or Mosaic Law, whereby one's approval or acceptance by God, either for salvation or blessing, is solely based on human works or the works of the Law respectively.** Interestingly, the Greek word, *katadouloo*, which means *absolute enslavement*, is one of the closest words that depict it. Legalism in a nutshell is anti-grace—anti-God's plan in its entirety! Wherever it's featured, it's nothing but Satan's dubious and disguised handiwork at best! What's really sad is that millions of believers ignorantly operate in a legalistic mode! Many flood the church with a false sense of salvation based on their self-righteous struggles or commitment to doing their best, such as keeping the law and being sweet to everyone. The bad news is that all these things are tantamount to morality which in itself cannot save anyone.

The truth of the matter is that no one has or will ever be saved by his own works! The Bible is emphatic about that: "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law [legalism] but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; **since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be**

justified [!] (Galatians 2:16).² There you have it documented in God's Word. Again, many people, especially ministers who are still not saved, plow a wagon trail of taboos for gaining salvation or approbation from God. To these, the Bible fires back: It can't work! We are saved by grace—faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9)—never by good works or any combination thereof!³ The Scripture is so lucid and adamant about faith alone in Christ alone as the ONLY means of appropriating salvation. In light of this truth, I urge you to cease and desist from whitewashing the tomb of your dead works for salvation! No matter how impressive your handiwork is to others, it cannot and will not impress God. The fact is that no matter how hard you strive with your own effort, you will never be able to muster up what it takes to electrify God for salvation. In a few words, it's the quintessence of human arrogance to substitute your own work for salvation apart from the efficacious sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. Such a mind-set is nothing, but arrogance in a polished state! And anyone who dies in that status quo would come up short-changed of spending eternity with God in Heaven!

What about sweating for the Lord's approval for blessing? I deliberately used the word, sweating, because it emphasizes human energy, rather than the Lord's finished work on the cross. Often believers lose their spiritual common sense out right when they confront simple doctrinal logic. With this said, let's, ask a simple common sense question: What did you do to receive the Lord's perfect righteousness, which resulted in your eternal adoption into God's Family? Do I hear someone mumbling—nothing. That's right—nothing! However, if you believe that you worked for it, you are probably not yet saved. The second question is similar to the one previously asked: Salvation and daily blessing, which one is greater? Did I hear—salvation? Right again! So if you did nothing to receive the GREATEST GIFT or 'Indescribable gift' as Paul describes it in II Corinthians 9:15, who gave you the audacity to think you need to work up a sweat to get the lesser gift? I am sure that it wasn't God, for the Scriptural logic is apt: "He who did not spare His own Son, but [freely] delivered Him up for us all, [logic:] how will He not also with Him [or through Him] **FREELY** give us all things [including our blessing in time and eternity]?" (Romans 8:32). As astonishing as it may be, our blessings in time and eternity flow through the tunnel of His everlasting grace, simply on the account of who and what Christ is—no more—no less. Although the conveyance of God's "above and beyond blessing" to us in time and in eternity are positively contingent on our spiritual growth through the use of God's grace tools already delineated. At this crossroad,

² Riding The Death Train (A gospel pamphlet by Moses C. Onwubiko).

³ Biblical Doctrine of Salvation (by Moses C. Onwubiko)

someone may ask me, “How can we identify legalistic teachings?”

That’s a question which deserves a well thought-out answer. We can do so by paying attention to doctrinal teachings which emphasis taboos,⁴ human efforts, such as self-imposed sufferings, gratification of self-will, self-wisdom and self-righteousness. We ought not lose sight of the fact that the Christian way of life does not run on the fuel of self-energy, rather on God’s (Zechariah 4:6). In light of this, the Apostle Paul summoned the believers in Ephesus, and his message is still vividly alive today, “...Be strong in the Lord, and in the **strength** of His **might** [not in our strength—not in our might—it’s in **His might** and in **His strength**—it’s that simple]” (Ephesians 6:10). He instructed them further to “Put on the full armor of God [not self-made weapons], that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (v. 11). And so, any doctrinal presentation, that does not teach total reliance on God for a spiritual lifestyle and execution of His game plan for your life is nothing but legalistic teaching straight from the heart of hell! And we ought to reject such a yoke outright!

The irony is that one would think that every Protestant would rightly divide the word of truth and call a spade what it is—a spade. Do you know that Satan is presently concentrating on confusing believers who detest the word legalism? That’s right! He’s feeding these unwitting believers with what the apostle Paul describes as the “doctrines of demons” (I Timothy 4:1). In other words, he’s twisting and tugging every imperative command in Scripture with a twist of legalism. As a result, any presentation of doctrinal truth, which challenges one’s responsibility to application, is instantly labeled legalism. What a score for the master of disguise! That shouldn’t be! Sadly, many so-called doctrinal believers have bought his lie straight from the Super Market of Hell!

This doctrinal exposition should pose an insurmountable challenge to you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth therein will change and humble you or it will cause your arrogant thinking to intensify. And so let’s be sure we are on the same page: Application of God’s word is NOT LEGALISM; however, forcing it down one’s throat is legalism in its true color; the Bible prohibits such an endeavor (I Peter 5:1, 2).

⁴ Taboos: Man-made religion—superimposing one’s ideologies on others as if they were God-ordained, for examples, forbidden believers from wearing certain dresses, or outlawed women from wearing pants or trousers or prohibited them from beautifying themselves with moderate apparels and make-ups.

LEGALISM VS. APPLICATION OF GOD’S WORD:

The phenomenal truth therein in God’s inerrant and infallible Word fascinates me as I dig deeper into its well of spiritual information. On the other hand, as I interact with fellow believers the reality of Satan being the masterpiece of deceit becomes apparent. He knows that almost every believer no matter how fussy his tangible knowledge may be has a measure of understanding of what it means to be legalistic. To this effect, he twists and tricks the unwitting believer to buy his lie, namely, to tag legalism on any doctrinal exposition that requires a believer to fulfill divine imperative commands. And get this: that’s a lie straight from the core of Hell! Unquestionably, Satan is a genius more than many credit him. He takes something that we concretely know, such as legalism and turns it as a weapon against us. What a slick and dubious act! Let me put it another way: His evil work among believers, especially Protestants, needs to be magnified so that every believer can clearly see it. He is acutely aware that the so-called doctrinal believers abhor the word legalism, and so he works hard to tag and camouflage every imperative command in Scripture with legalism. In light of his deception, I say to you that if application of God’s Word is labeled legalism, what’s the value of the Bible? And what in the world are we doing here after our salvation? Make no mistake about it, the reason some believers are not applying God’s Word is because of their misconception of grace.

MISINTERPRETATION OF GRACE: According to the grapevine, quite a number of believers assume that grace means let God do your shopping, cook for you, feed you, chew it, and invariably swallow it and excrete the waste for you. Of course that’s a ridiculous supposition. But that’s exactly how heretical teachers interpret imperative moods of command in Scripture—teaching their audience not to be mentally burdened with regard to applying God’s word. They teach that doing so would be tantamount to legalism. Their congregations endeavor to fulfill the mandate of, “not forsaking our own assembling together” (Hebrews 10:25a); they attend Bible class, take good notes, file them neatly on their shelves and forget everything about the teaching of that day. On the contrary, James zeroed in to counteract falsehood: “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:21-25). Proverbially, there are a thousand and one imperatives in Scripture; they are passively or actively constructed. The Bible actually warned communicators of Scripture to steer away from legalism (I Peter 5:1-3).

PARENTAL AUTHORITY: Parents have divinely appointed authority to set the tone or regulations that govern their children; and these rules do not fall under legalism, although, they could if taken to the extreme. We will begin to tap into David's mindset when we resume our study in Volume 37.

MISSIONARY REPORTS

G.E.M. - U.S.A., Nashville, TN
Moses Onwubiko, President and Founder

G.E.M. Nashville has been blessed with a new and better space. The Lord in His ultimate grace and wisdom selected the perfect space right across the hall from the old office. The prior tenant's improvements were tailor made for G.E.M.'s needs, so no moving up or down stairs. A container shipment from the U.S. to Nigeria is planned for late summer 2004. (See container shipment heading for details.)



G.E.M. Africa
Darlington Elekwa, Executive Director

NEWS FROM NIGERIA, Darlington Elekwa
Col. R. B. Thieme, Jr.'s book on Prayer will be distributed at the Evangelical Church of West Africa conference. The donation and arrival of the books is causing great excitement among the conference organizers. Thanks a million times for getting the books to us.

NEWS FROM KENYA, Rev. Otukho Naboth, Nairobi Kenya
GRAND SUCCESS FOR EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN LEADERS CONFERENCE
This year's Grace Evangelistic Ministries East African Conference made it possible for G.E.M. to permeate all eight countries of the region that sent representatives to the program. Kenya has become the hub for the region. From there, missionaries, doctrinal literature such as books, tapes, and computer resources shall be distributed.

Rev. Moses traveled to conferences in Muhoroni and Nairobi. He was in awe of what God is accomplishing. Church leaders from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, D.R. Congo, Ethiopia, and Switzerland convened to listen to this year's teachings hosted at the Nairobi Grace Doctrine Church. As a result of all we have established, representatives and fellowships among many churches will henceforth receive and carry out ministry responsibilities that range from arranging ministry seminars and mini conferences to articulating sound Bible instructions and distributing doctrinal material and hosting classes and discussion groups in many countries.

KENYA: The following regions and sub regions have been reached so far: Nairobi Province, Mombassa and Coastal Province, Kisumu and Nyanza Province, Vihiga and Bungoma Districts, Mt Kenya and Elgon, and the entire Western and Eastern Provinces through Meru and Thika.

UGANDA: The capital city of Kampala that hosts one of the most radical doctrinal classes is quickly responding and has become pivotal for the entire country. A pastor attending from the east has introduced Grace Doctrine in the Eastern Uganda regions including small towns such as Lira and Kitgum. His efforts working together with local pastors in this region will soon result in our first conference there.

Pastor Naboth Otukho, from Nairobi, has already held seminars to introduce sound Bible teachings through Pastors in Mbarara and Fort Portal regions of Western Uganda where ministry doors are open already. We have pastors in Busia - Uganda and Kabale distributing our books in that region. With the Kampala team organizing more meetings, we have deep confidence that Uganda will quickly be introduced to TRUTH in the very near future.

TANZANIA is coming up fast and strong with point men (pastors) who are well endowed with resources and extensive networking among leaders in their respective localities. A pastor and four leaders came from Mwanza, a big city to the north on the shores of lake Victoria. This large congregation has requested a conference. If and when the Lord opens the door for a conference, the tide is set to turn toward God's grace and Sound Bible exposition.

The western cosmopolitan town of Isebania is home to some of the fastest growing ministries in Kenya. We had representation from this region last year which caused a spill over to Tarime, a border town of Tanzania. Three pastors attended from Magu, an area reached by Mrs. Elizabeth Otukho, who went there expressly to distribute books and tapes and send out invitations for the conference.

Dar Ess Salaam is the capital city of Tanzania and lies 1,200 Kilometers from Nairobi. A pastor in this city was reached with teaching and reasoning (at length) of various doctrinal issues during a previous visit. The pastor attended our conference and brought eight leaders along. We have received an invitation for October (this year) to meet with many church leaders in Dar Ess Salaam, including this pastor's large congregation. Tanzania now hearkens the call to Sound Bible Truth.

BURUNDI: Pastor Phillippe Selemani left our program last year mightily changed and with a grieving heart for members of his former church. As he began teaching doctrine to this assembly, the church leadership disagreed and threw him out; however, working in collaboration with pastor Naboth, the

"Bujumbura Grace Doctrine Church" was born with a congregation of 80 members. The church has since hit the path of growth and has remained a launching pad for our outreach operational programs in the Central African region. Since pastor Naboth did a full one-week seminar in the church in February, 2004, D.R. Congo cities of Bukavu, Goma, and Uvira have been reached and sent representation to our Nairobi program in 2004. Rev. Moses is currently seeking God's direction in regard to visiting Burundi's fast growing doctrinal church next year.

RWANDA is such a small country but globally renown due to the worst genocide that followed their 1994 civil war. Since peace was restored, Rwanda has been a darling to many false teachers, many from the West. Pastor Naboth has been in the country 12 times in the last two years and met three pastors whose churches are now teaching sound Bible Doctrine. The three churches and others were represented in this year's program. Kigali, the capital of Rwanda now has a nondenominational grace doctrine class that has requested a conference from a ministry leader in Nairobi and possibly a visit by Rev. Moses next year.

ETHIOPIA: Our representative there continues to hold on and has been consistent in attending our leader's meetings in Nairobi. The pastor there came with two more leaders this year.

SWITZERLAND: Rev. Marco Tamoni attended our program this year giving our ministry a new cutting edge for Europe.

For this work to be sustained, we ask for prevalent intercessory prayers and support through the grace provision of God in order that we may meet the ever-growing needs for outreach to this vast region that has been served by the two programs that Rev. Moses has so far presided over. May God richly keep you and use you as a pertinent tool for His grace programs around the world.

Africa mission trips planned for December 2004: Nigeria



G.E.M. Europe

Rev. Elijah Dennis Ejila, President

News from the U.K., Reported by Dennis Ejila

God is at work again. Last week, a British born Muslim became the first European to voluntarily donate to GEM Europe.

When I went to print the flyer's for GEM, as soon as the owner discovered I was a pastor, he said he is very happy when he sees Men of God. He believes that if people like us are removed from this earth, the world system will

collapsed. He said the world is enjoying some kind of peace because people like me are going about teaching others about Jesus Christ. As such, he will write off our \$350 printing bill as his encouragement that I should continue to teach people the way of the Lord in Europe. I was so confused and amazed because I have not seen anything like this. God can use anything and anyone to glorify his name. Then and there, I presented the gospel to him. He said he believed in Jesus!

Meanwhile a church has opened their doors to me to teach bible studies in their church for the next three weeks. In fact, the Pastor, after listening the first night, expressed satisfaction. Today, the Pastor has gone on holiday trusting me to feed the Church with the right doctrine. God works his wonders in various ways. Thank you for your prayers. Till next time our co partner in missions ELIJAH DENNIS Requests for literature are coming in as contacts are made in London. We are now preparing for Rev. Moses visit.

Europe mission trips planned: London & Cornwall August 18 - September 13, 2004



G.E.M. Asia

We are continuing to work on translation and printing of doctrinal literature into the native languages of India and Pakistan. The long task of translating Joe Griffin's basic tapes for pastors in India has begun.

Asia mission trips planned: We anticipate a trip to India and Pakistan February/March of 2005

LETTERS TO G.E.M.

Dear Friends in Him!

We are very blessed to be able to have a small part in your wonderful ministry. We really look forward to getting "Grace News Today" and hearing all that is going on all over the world in your ministry. We love the Doctrine of Grace you are teaching in the newsletter and the wonderful books that you have published. Thank you SO much!

Friends in Him.
U.S.A.

Moses Onwubiko
Grace Evangelistic Ministries

Sir:

I most highly thank God for the grace privilege placed upon you. I have been richly blessed through it when I read your book "Comfort in Suffering" I was facing bizarre problems but God ministered and consoled me. To God be the Glory. In fact I humbly ask you to mail your books (ALL) as it will

help me as a young Christian with an intimate desire to serve God in my generation. By God, I commend and appreciate Grace Evangelistic Ministries which indeed is seasoned with grace unlike what we see today in many ministries that have lost the true grace message.

Sir, please join forces with me in prayer for I have a deep passion for mission work but want to know whether it is out of zeal or actually a calling. This is important to verify, to avoid mistakes. If there is any Bible course in your ministries, I would like to be enlisted. I also need tracts for witnessing. I thank God in all things.

Yours in Him
Nigeria

Dear Moses:

I want to thank you for your devotion to the Gospel of Christ. I thought I was a believer until I got it right through Col. R. B. Thieme Jr. years ago. I was an unbeliever even though, I thought I was a believer. There are so many people here in the states that have salvation wrong and they don't even know it. So many of those very ones are my family members! I pray that God will give you and your family the strength to carry on. Men (point men) like you and Rick Knapp, Joe Griffin, Bobby Thieme, Rick Hughes and others have sacrificed your personal lives for the work of Christ that we may hear the truth and the truth sets us free. I may never see you face to face on earth sir, but I will be thanking you in person in Heaven. I thank my God in heaven for you guys.

Keep the Faith
USA

Dear Sister Debby,

We write to thank you so very much in reflecting the grace of God to us through the cassette players you sent to us. It has and is still helping us in our studies. You are aware that the country is producing less than 4,000 kilowatts of electricity which is grossly inadequate for a population of over 120 million people. We in Jos and Nigeria believe that what God is doing is just a tip of the iceberg of what God has for this generation. Two thousand years ago Satan had only a few persons to fight. Today in Nigeria alone he has millions to fight. Years back Satan thought he could obliterate Bible doctrine by distorting teachings in our pulpits. Thank God for using GEM to bring us back on track. Your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Keep it up until our Master and Savior returns.

Two Bible Students
Nigeria

SPIRITUAL HUNGER IN AFRICA

There is a tremendous hunger in Africa, not for food as such, but for the truth. Would you make it a burden to pray routinely that God would graciously provide enough doctrinal materials on tape and in literature for those who are starving for sound Bible teaching? And, that this ministry would never lack in quenching their spiritual thirst to know and have

2004 MISSIONARY ITINERARY

Aug 18 – Sept 13 UK
 Sept 10 – Nov 28 USA
 Nov 29 – Dec 3 Lagos, Nigeria
 Dec 5 – Dec 10 Jos, Nigeria
 Dec 13–Dec 17 Amaba, Nigeria
 Dec 18–Dec 22 Aba, Nigeria
 Dec 23–Dec 26 Amaba, Nigeria

CONTAINER SHIPMENT

Over the years, many of our associates have called us wanting to donate one thing or another. We are now accepting donations for shipment to Africa.

- Bibles (good versions for new converts and study tools for doctrinal pastors)
- Computers, monitors, copy machines, printers
- TVs & VCRs for tape groups
- Doctrinal literature
- Miscellaneous (If you have something else to donate, other than those listed, please call us.)

Mail donations to (Call G.E.M. for a receipt for your donation for tax purposes)

Grace Evangelistic Ministries
 c/o Dr. Tom & Nancy Northcott
 111 Hickory Hill;
 Tullahoma, TN 37388

CONTAINER TO AFRICA BUDGET

Reprints (new converts)	\$4,000.00
Major Bible Themes (Chafer)	
200 copies (pastors)	\$2,400.00
Key Word Study Bibles, NAB,	
300 copies (pastors)	\$6,750.00
Willington's Guide to the Bible	
100 copies (pastors)	\$2,200.00
Expository Bible Dictionary	
100 copies (pastors)	\$2,200.00
Blank tapes to dub Thieme, Knapp, Griffin, Onwubiko, Clay Ward, and Dean's doctrinal tapes in Africa 10,000	\$2,100.00
Container shipment	\$3,500.00

BUDGET FOR AFRICA MISSION TRIP

Airfare for Four	\$ 6,652
Five hotel rooms @ \$180	<u>900</u>
	\$7,552
Aba Bible Conference	
Publicity	\$ 667
Hall/Venue	592
Transportation	448
Incidentals	448
Accommodation for 7 Missionaries	1,865
Meals missionaries	<u>703</u>
	\$ 4,723
Jos 5th Int'l Pastors/Church Workers Conference	
Publicity	\$ 448
Hall/Venue	370
Accommodation for 350 pastors 5 days @ \$3.70/day	6,481
Transportation 275 pastors 5 days (37c/day)	102
Children's Program with Debby 4 days	222
Transportation (Jos/Amaba)	481
Extra Chairs	74
Accommodation of Missionaries (6 for 7-8 days)	1,865
Meals Missionaries (6 for 7 days)	<u>703</u>
	\$10,746
Amaba Crusade & Pastors Conference	
Accommodation for 200 Pastors	\$1,500
Transportation for pastors	447
Transportation for team	447
Publicity	515
Works and Logistics	446
Security	148
Meals missionaries & guests	1,406
Meals for Pastors (200 @ 5 days)	1,925
Incidentals	370
	<u>\$ 7,204</u>
TOTAL	\$ 30,225

**ASIAN TRANSLATION & REPRINTS OF RIDING
THE DEATH TRAIN (Gospel Pamphlet)**

Pakistan	120,000	\$2,200.00
God's Plan after Salv.	4,000	\$ 953.00
India	100,000	\$2,570.00

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYER

But first, let's give thanks to our Father for the successful trip to Kenya and for allowing us to glorify Him once again; and also for paving the way for a return trip to the United Kingdom. We are especially thankful for our spiritual freedom to carry His word wherever He chooses in His perfect timing!

PETITION TO OUR FATHER:

- President George Bush (For wisdom)
- Israel's protection and the U.S. Military
- The US (For a great revival, peace, and freedom from terrorism)
- The safety of Moses and team as they travel.
- For protection of tape ministries, G.E.M. personnel, and foreign translations,
- Robert Thieme, III's ministry (and the health of Col. & Mrs. R.B. Thieme, Jr.)
- The spiritual growth of the churches we formed
- Seminary students whom we support (that God will equip them in every way)
- For many open doors in the year 2004
- Divine provision and sustenance for a missionary desiring full time work in the field.
- Energy, wisdom, and discernment for G.E.M.'s God-assembled team.

CONTACT US to receive updates and prayer requests:

[E-MAILCAFE:debby@debbyhagar.com](mailto:debby@debbyhagar.com)

Or visit us on the internet: www.gracemissions.org

IRS DISCLOSURE

Grace Evangelistic Ministries is a non-profit, tax-exempt, missionary organization. And under the Internal Revenue code 501-C (3), all contributions to this ministry qualify for tax-deductions. If you would like to be on our mailing list to receive this bi-monthly issue of Grace News Today with no obligation, please write to us:

FINANCIAL POLICY: There's no charge for any material from Grace Evangelistic Ministries. Anyone who desires accurate Bible teaching, can receive our books without obligation, whatsoever, God provides Bible doctrine. We wish to reflect His grace.

The Overview of Grace Evangelistic Ministries Grace Evangelistic Ministries is incorporated in the State of Tennessee as a nonprofit, nondenominational sound Bible teaching missionary oriented Christian organization. Our Mission: In obedience to the command of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ....."Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations." (Matt 28:19)

Objective #1

Evangelize unbelievers with the simple, Grace Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will depend solely on the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit to make the gospel clear without resorting to gimmicks or imposing our personal views on others. We must present the gospel but leave the decision to "believe in" or to "reject" Christ to the hearers.

Objective #2

For those who choose to believe in Christ, we will seize the opportunity to assist in the following ways:

- a) Help them form Bible study groups;
- b. Provide them with doctrinal materials, including recorded Bible lessons and literature, enabling them to fulfill the command: "As newborn babies desire the sincere

milk of the word [sound Bible doctrine] that you may grow thereby." (I Peter 2:2);

- c. Where possible, assist them in establishing their own local churches;
- d. Help them select pastors who teach sound Bible doctrine; and
- e. As the Lord makes funds available, provide financial assistance until they are self-supporting.

Objective #3

Because those who have responded to the gospel will become unfruitful if they are not exposed to sound Bible teaching, we will seek out or establish theological seminaries to prepare indigenous pastors. Their training will be consistent with Paul's mandate to Pastor Timothy to "Study to show yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (II Timothy 2: 15)

Objective #4

As the need arises, we will send doctrinally motivated, short-term and long-term missionaries to minister to newly formed groups and churches.

Objective #5

We will use literature and other media to reach and nurture those to whom we cannot minister in person. To minimize expenses, we will establish overseas centers for audio cassette duplication of recorded Bible lessons and reproduction of doctrinal literature. In keeping with our grace policy, individuals and groups will never be charged for these materials.

Objective #6

Offer humanitarian assistance as the Lord provides and directs us.

Objective #7

Prepare periodic newsletters, which include Bible exposition and testimonies, for distribution to our associates by mail and the Internet.

Currently available publications from Grace Evangelistic Ministries

