

G + R + A + C + E

GOD'S RICHES



CHRIST'S ENABLEMENT

AUGUST 2000

My heart is to simply share truths that God reveals through this discipling ministry. When my focus is on His truths (and not just results), my focus is on Christ, for Christ is the Truth (**John 14:6**). And the Truth frees us (**John 8:32, 36**). It's a joy to sense God leading me to share His truths through this monthly newsletter with you. I pray He richly blesses you. From my heart and Joy's, Gregg Gibbons

This month, someone challenged that I was teaching grace without responsibility. It was such an honest challenge. Initially, I felt like the foundation of my whole life was shaken. In a matter of seconds, I lifted up a silent prayer to God, and came to a greater appreciation that the essence of prayer is dependence on God.

And oh how God is faithful! God led me to have the person clarify where he was coming from with his statement. This person said that as the head of his household, he had the responsibility for how his marriage turns out. He further noted that God's commandments are boundaries set up for his well-being and that God has given him a mind to be responsible to obey the commandments. How right all this sounded at first, and it did contain a grain of truth. I believe that's how the evil one subtly lures us away from Christ's life.

I never articulated this before, but by God's grace I responded as follows. God never intended for us to live burdened according to His commandments. Oh, how He yearns for us to freely live according to the life of His precious Son in us! God's commandments are really invitations for us to experience Christ's life in us – to experience His *initiating grace* (the origin of true desires to obey) and His *enabling grace* (responses of faith, or works). We cannot obey commandments no matter how hard we try, which is what God wants us to know (**Romans 3:20 and 8:3**).

In the flesh (even good-looking religious flesh), commandments are cold instructions – mere words on paper – a one-sided selfish relationship. In Christ (in the Spirit), commandments are warm invitations to experience Christ's life by faith – a two-sided love relationship!

Listen to these words by A.B. Simpson from the 19th century: "The way to look at the Scriptures and understand the thoughts of God is to see in them the face of love, shining through and through; not ideas, nor doctrines, but Jesus Himself as the Life and Source and sustaining Presence of all our life." Isn't that great?!

So, it's not my responsibility, but my response to Christ's ability that is the key! Christ is responsible for results; I am responsible for trusting and obeying *Him*. This does not mean being passive. Ever since God revealed that Christ is my life and I am one with Him, I have been much more active and joyful in sharing His life than ever before.

I shared the gospel truths with a teenager once a week during August, and he is eagerly receiving the truths. At the end of a recent discipling session, he agreed to close in prayer. Each sentence of his prayer started with "Thank you." God blessed me as I thought about how "Thank you" is the essence of prayer in response to grace.

I participated in teaching a Gracelife Conference August 8, 9, and 10 with eight attendees. One attendee, a professional licensed counselor for over 20 years, now feels led to Christ-centered counseling. Two attendees were a mother and son who surrendered their lives to God. I will share more truths from this conference next month.

GRACE NOTE:

LAW proudly says, "It's up to me with God's help."
GRACE says, "It's all up to God." FAITH humbly responds to GRACE by saying, "Thank you, Lord Jesus."
LAW and EFFORT seek to do the most right thing. GRACE and FAITH seek to do the most loving thing.