

**GRACE ...
WHAT IT TEACHES
US**

BY

ROLF E. KEUSEN

© Copyright 2019 - Rolf E. Keusen

1st edition 2019

All rights reserved. According to the copyright of the German Federal Republic this book is protected. It may not be copied or printed for commercial purposes and use. It is permitted to use short quotations or to make copies of a page for personal or group use. Approval will be granted upon request.

*Editor: Edition Keusen-Ministries
 Im Buchenhain 35
 D-63225 Langen*

Email: rolf.keusen@t-online.de

Bibles used:

The Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright 1984 by International Bible Society, Hodder and Stoughton Limited.

Other versions used are the KJV (The Authorized Version or King James Version (KJV), 1611, 1769. Outside of the United Kingdom, the KJV is in the public domain. Within the United Kingdom, the rights to the KJV are vested in the Crown.)

The Revised Standard Version (RSV)

Any highlighting is done by the author.

Cover photo: Detail from the baptism window in the St.Paul Münster in Esslingen/Neckar, created by Prof. Dr. Johannes Schreiter, used by permission

Cover:

Daniela Rang-Keusen - drk-artwork

ISBN NR: 978-3-9821389-0-9

CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. Preface by the author	7
II. Preface by Pastor Herbert Lang	9
III. Introduction	11
1. The precious price of grace	17
2. Justice versus love	29
3. What grace teaches us	47
4. Delivered from misery	58
5. The gist	69
Appendices	
A. Bibliography	73
B. Other Books by Rolf Keusen in English	75



PREFACE BY THE AUTHOR

The following treatise was drawn up to ascribe grace, its importance, price and conflict, its due value.

Nowadays, in many places grace is regarded as a given good which is everybody's unconditional due, which is only true under certain conditions.

This is why I find it important to show these correlations so that we will not be led astray and we will be able to discern potential deception.

Matthew 24:24

For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (NIV).

We have to be aware that the correct conclusions have to be drawn from the statements in the Bible, therefore it is necessary to look at statements in their context. I have on purpose quoted longer passages of the Bible in order to show them in their respective context.

I wish you God's blessing when reading this treatise and recommend that you ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears in order to understand how deeply He cares to lead us into the depth of his thoughts regarding grace.

I do not want to forget to thank my wife Erika with all of my heart for her input to this book. I always appreciate how she co-operates with me in her own special way to put complex thoughts into understandable wording.

I also appreciate the input of other family members and friends who are by my side with constructive comments. I am particularly indebted to my daughter Daniela Rang-Keusen, my friends Thomas Schöninger and Pastor Herbert Lang, who were my important companions in the birthing of this book with their counsel, suggestions, additions and encouragements. Also, my special thanks to Ilka Engelhardt who translated the Book into English



PREFACE

PASTOR

HERBERT LANG

It requires an assignment from God to write about grace, and it needs the humble knowledge that our mind will never grasp or know God in His greatness and wisdom. Rather, the issue is that we know ourselves before God and His Word as well as our lost state and the unique gift of grace which takes on shape in Jesus' cross.

I am grateful that in this book Jesus' sacrifice is unfolded against the background of the sacrifices as seen in the covenant made at Sinai, and thus connections become apparent which have led me even deeper into wonder about, and worship of, the love of God.



INTRODUCTION

The Bible verses are largely taken from the NIV unless otherwise marked.

Before getting into the issue, I would like to clarify some basics upon which further thoughts are based.

John 15:5

I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Jesus teaches us that we are a vessel, a temple, a branch of the vine or a member of His body. If we take a closer look at these words, we discover that they point to one common fact: without being connected to or filled by the true source, we are not really viable. In other words: separate from Jesus we cannot do anything of eternal value.

If we believe that God's word is true, we also believe Jesus' statement that, apart from Him, we can do nothing. Then why do we fight with God about what NOTHING is?

- *Wouldn't it be much cleverer to believe God's word and act accordingly?*
- *And if we can't do anything without HIM, we shouldn't actually do anything without HIM.*

God created us as human beings and not as human 'doings', i.e. God created us to be and not to perform

I could see it my own life and in that of others how quickly we draw our self-worth from what we are doing. We forget all too easily that God has purposed us not to do but to have communion with Him. Every activity which stems from our own works will never gain God's approval.

It is one of our basic problems that our fleshly nature tends to copy behaviour patterns, which already caused Adam and Eve to fall. They started to have their own thoughts about the "how and when" of their actions – blended by some vague notion of self-fulfilment. This made man receptive to Satan's insinuations, which flatters our drive towards independence, and man ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This missing the target separated man from their intimate communion with God. However, it was God's plan to instruct us about his plans and works so that they can be carried out according to his intention. But man decided to know by himself, to do himself and to fulfil himself independently of God's instruction instead of obeying God, to be counselled by Him and to be inspired by His wisdom and knowledge.

When we analyse this latently existing ungodly urge to do something on our own, we discover that in the end this is based on a lack of identity. This in turn leads to the falla-

cious assumption that we could define ourselves through our own performance, effort and the fruits of our doing.

This approach is in stark contrast to Jesus' statement that we are not servants and slaves but sons and daughters. Wouldn't it then be wise to ask him to teach us how to *be* sons and daughters?

As long as we do not grasp that sonship is synonymous with being and is the key to the loving heavenly Father, I'm asking myself why on earth we are content with second, if not third, choice whereas our due would be first choice. If only we were willing to be concerned again with God's offer of entering into the lost, intimate communion with Him.

I am convinced that the conflict between being and doing bears one of the most difficult lessons we have to learn. For especially this realisation accounts for the difference between a Christian life with underlying performance-oriented, religious and legalistic traits and one characterised by freedom, fulfilment, happiness, and support.

Therefore it is much more relieving to walk in *God's* paths and to do *His* works than to submit to the frustration which awaits us on our own erroneous paths.

God cannot and will not deny His Word and His character

HE is who HE is and keeps what HE says. HE is the same yesterday, today and forever. HE cannot and will not change - simply because HE is God and not man. Contrary to us, HE is perfect and does not need to change. But we are not God, hence not "perfect" and therefore dependent on being changed into the likeness of Jesus.

The free will

There is one thing which is imperative to note: God respects our free will. HE will never ask us for something which we wouldn't offer Him voluntarily or which we wouldn't do from our free will. It is solely up to us whether we allow him to support us in all areas: HE is willing, but are we? Under no circumstances will HE go *against* our will.

However, it could be that God lets circumstances work on us in such a way that we cannot and do not want to resist His offer. The story of how God convinced Jonah to go to Nineveh and there announce the judgement of God is a case in point.

Whatever the case, we determine how much and where HE may intervene even though HE is God.

The theme of this book is guided by the following premises:

I would ask you to look at all statements made in this book through the filter of these premises. Then, I am sure, there is no room for self-accusations, condemnation and accusation

- *Without Him we can do nothing.*
- *God created us to be and not to perform.*
- *God cannot deny His word and His character.*
- *He respects our free will and will never violate this principle.*

1

THE PRECIOUS PRICE OF GRACE

- *Jesus is risen*
- *Jesus lives*
- *Because Jesus lives forever, we also live through Him*

Notwithstanding all joy, enthusiasm and relief which we might feel because of this, we should and may never forget the price which Jesus paid so that we can say today:

"Jesus lives and we are alive with Him"

The price HE paid for this was His sacrificial death on the cross.

Once we have grasped the extent of Jesus' suffering, when we have understood which price Jesus had to pay that we can say: "We are alive with Him", only then will we understand from which indescribable lost state Jesus saved us and how high the price for our salvation was. Only then will His sacrifice be precious and comprehensible for us.

Hereafter, we want to take a closer look at two Bible passages, Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22, and we want to deal with Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection from a prophetic standpoint. You could accuse me of using passages from the "Old Testament". However, we should know that the "Old Testament" is a prophetic view of the "New Testament" and that the "New Testament" is the fulfilment of the prophecies in the "Old Testament". That's all I'm going to reply to this argument.

I want us to understand the price our Lord had to pay to redeem us from our debt. Therefore I want to try to reveal not only Jesus' physical, but also His soul's misery and suffering.

Isaiah 53:2-3

2 He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

HE was abandoned by all, even his disciples slunk away; the only ones staying near him were Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalene, and John. These three watched from afar. Courage had left them and they were absent. Out of fear ... for their own lives which before they so courageously were willing to give. All others present, incited by the religious leaders, had only mockery and scorn for Him. The priests, the Pharisees and the scribes seemingly triumphed, but against better

knowledge ... for Nicodemus, a leader among the Jews, clearly said:

John 3:2

He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher¹ who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Finally they were able to take the troublesome firebrand down and, before that, to convict him of pretention, as God, to whom He always referred, did not help Him and – according to their interpretation – did not answer him.

Isaiah 53:4-5

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed and stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. (RSV)

They really didn't get it! They could have understood it if they had interpreted correctly the Scriptures which they pretended to hold in such high esteem, but what does Scripture teach us? "They have ears and hear not ... they have eyes but see not" ... but beware, if we do not want to hear or see, we will suffer the same, we will not be able to see the wood for the trees.

They did not realize what God's plan was for His son, that HE was the sacrificial Lamb of God which would carry our sins and our iniquities so that we could have peace with God.

Isaiah 53:6-11

Isa. 53:6-11 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his

¹ THE teacher

mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. 8 By oppression and judgement he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? 9 And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand; 11 he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

That's what Jesus did for us!

- *He permitted them to completely disfigure Him*
- *He allowed men to desert Him*
- *He allowed them to scorn Him*
- *He carried our sorrows and pour pains – HE put them on Himself*
- *He let soldiers pierce Him for our transgressions*
- *He allowed them to beat Him up for our iniquities*
- *He took the chastisement of our peace upon Him*
- *By His stripes we are healed*

This is the result:

- *The punishment for all our sin was laid upon Him and thus 'God's justice was satisfied.*

- *Through this HE prepared the way for God that HE can have mercy on us.*

Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him. HE has put Him to grief. HE took our sin upon Himself. Jesus died so that through His sacrifice HE could offer us as a gift total freedom from the enslavement of sin.

This means ... redemption in body, soul and spirit.

Let us now take a look at the prophetic view on Jesus' suffering and death.

Psalm 22:2-3

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night, but find no rest.

My God, why have you forsaken me? Let's keep in mind that Jesus was always connected to his Father. HE was never separated from him. HE acted solely on the Father's bidding and always sought to be near Him. HE did not know separation from His Father. HE had never experienced that His calling, His cry was not answered. His connection to God was always open. HE had a dedicated line to His Father.

Except for these hours on the cross, when HE took upon Himself the burden of sin and the heavenly Father had to turn away from Jesus, his beloved son. In these hours He experienced all of the forlornness, the complete forsakenness, the separation from God ... *that is hell!*

HE who had nothing in common with sin was all alone in these hours. Jesus experienced total separation from God as a man, something that no person before Him had to go through. No one, neither man nor Satan ever had to experience this complete distance from God. For even if we disa-

vow God, HE is still there. HE never banned any person – be they good or evil – into the darkness of separation from God. Even Satan has not experienced this complete darkness of separation from God.

Doesn't Scripture tell us that Jesus was made sin for us; He carried our sin to the cross. In this time Jesus was separated from his Father, the holy God. In His holiness HE could not have communion with his son, upon whom the sin was laid. That meant desperation, misery, distress and plight, which came over Jesus in the face of forsakenness by the Father.

Psalm 22:3-5

3 Yet thou art holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. 4 In thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. 5 To thee they cried, and were saved; in thee they trusted, and were not disappointed.

But YOU are holy...therefore YOU cannot stay in communion with me in these hours. Although YOU were the hope of the fathers across the ages and never disappointed them, even though YOU answered their pleading and calling....But in my case YOU cannot answer me.

Psalm 22:6-18

6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. 7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. 8 "He trusts in the LORD," they say, "let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." 9 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother's breast. 10 From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. 11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. 12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. 13 Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me. 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. 15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. 16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my

*feet. 17 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me.
18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.*

This was the suffering of Jesus in a prophetic preview. Not a single detail was overlooked, neither the physical torture nor the mental anguish which our beloved Lord suffered. This also was Jesus. Jesus, who for the love for us lived through the path of suffering of anguish, He lived through the separation from the Father to pay the price of salvation for you and me.

Precisely in this time of suffering, I am sure, HE looked through the centuries and already then saw you and me, HE saw us here in our time and consciously said YES to all of us, it is worth it, and it is the only way I can save them from this misery, the anguish, and the eternal state of being lost.

Psalm 22:19-21

9 But you, LORD, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. 20 Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. 21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. (You have heard me.)

This is the suffering of the unsaved soul, this is the anguish of being lost, this is the eternal fear, which the soul of those who are far from God is exposed to forever, but this also is the much-hailed nothing after death, it's the rude awakening into a never-ending nightmare.

Then Jesus' cry resounded and is still resounding through the ages:

You have heard me!

Then HE also knew that God answered his calling, his cry in need. For this cry ended in praise and worship of God, his

Saviour. The Holy One of God was heard. God's resurrection power became effective in Jesus.

Jesus' cry of triumph, which caused the enemy to tremble, for thus his end was sealed, he had lost once and for all. The "My God you have heard me" brought to us humans the freedom from sin; it sealed our inheritance in Jesus. The price of atonement was paid once and for all. The curtain before the Holy of Holies was rent; Jesus has cleared for us the access to the Heavenly Father.

But ... why this suffering, why this anguish? Why could He not just been executed in a humane way? HE would have died as a just person in any case. True, but the price for freedom would not have been paid.

God is just, and the justice of God required punishment and atonement for committed sins. Someone had to pay for the guilt committed by man.

Therefore, someone had to be found, someone who was willing to pay for this debt in order to satisfy the justice of God. The problem was that this sacrifice could not be offered by a human or by an animal, as we human beings brought the whole creation under the yoke of the original sin. This is where God comes into play.

God loves man and he certainly would have liked to spare us his judgement. But HE couldn't do that because HE cannot deny his character. That precisely is *the conflict between merciful, graceful, slow to anger and faithful on the one hand and God's justice on the other hand.*

God's justice is just the flip side of love: if HE had forgiven our sins without atonement, HE would not have been able to bring to justice evil, the evil one, Satan and bring him to final

eradication. Because God judges according to the principle “the same right and the same justice for all”. Satan is a rebel, and all his subjects have become guilty of rebellion. As we as human beings become part of this rebellion through disobedience, all progeny of Adam came under the judgement of God according to the law of original sin through their mere existence on earth. Those who did not accept Jesus as their Saviour are enemies of God – this is what the Holy Scriptures teaches us. If God had pardoned us without atonement, HE would have had to pardon Satan as well.

But there is no limit to God’s wisdom, therefore HE sent his son as the sacrificial lamb. HE became one of us and lived as one of us. The difference between him and us is this: HE did not live under the law of original sin, for God himself and not Adam was his father.

Jesus was born to die as a sacrificial lamb. But HE has achieved so much more for us. HE has given us complete freedom from slavery through sin and thus bought us from Satan and so put us in the position of sonship and co-heirs. HE made himself equal to the fallen the unworthy. HE is the first fruit from the dead; HE is the brother of many children of God.

Psalm 22:22-28

22 I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. 23 You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! 24 For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. 25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows. 26 The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the LORD will praise him--may your hearts live forever! 27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, 28

for dominion (kingdom) belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations.

Thus Jesus' kingdom was erected. He who descended into the deepest depth has been raised above everything and He has taken his place at the right hand of the power.

This step of Jesus opened the path of grace to us humans – our perspective from the dilemma of merciful, graceful; slow to anger and faithful ... and justice. It is only because of this that God can be merciful to us human beings, because his justice was satisfied through Jesus' sacrifice.

Through this, HE opened for us the way back to our Heavenly Father, if we accept him, Jesus, as our Saviour. The price has been paid, the way is open, and the invitation has been given and is valid for every human being. The question is whether this invitation is accepted. Or a person rejects the salvation work of Jesus and hence chooses to take upon himself to pay the atonement for his sins and to pay for it as well. My dear friends, this is the alternative arising from Jesus' resurrection. For the one it is the hope for eternal life through Jesus with God, for the others, who have no regard for his work and who reject the offered salvation, the redemption from God's judgement, eternal separation from God, the anguish of hell. That is the consequence!

For the repentant sinner, the one with insight for joy, for the self-righteous for condemnation. We have to be aware that, despite the paid price, we only can claim salvation if we walk in the path which God has prepared. The door to God is Jesus. HE, Jesus, said of himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life."

*He is the way
Which through truth leads to life.*

I don't want to dampen the joy of the resurrection; I only want to show the flip side of the coin. The flip side is the victory price which Jesus obtained for us.

Psalm 22:30-31

30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. 31 They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

Here, my friends, David talks about you and me, about “a people yet to be born.” This is the body of Christ, God's ultimate creation. This is His people, created for His glory, a people of kings and priests. This is what Jesus saw when HE suffered on the cross of Golgotha, when HE bled to death, when HE died and cried out:

It is finished!

Once we have understood deep down in our hearts what it cost Jesus to redeem us, when we have realised from which forlornness, which misery, which eternal anguish Jesus has saved us, we can no longer play around and we can no longer play with grace. Then we are on the safe side, then we are making our salvation sure, for we know whence we come and where we go and what Jesus has saved us from.

Then it will become the desire of our heart to honour God for what HE has done for us by honouring him with our life, to serve him as his servants. This makes Jesus' suffering ... his resurrection message so precious for us, because we know the price, just because Jesus let himself be slaughtered as God's sacrificial lamb ... through his blood we have access again to the Father. Nothing is left from wrongly perceived, cheap grace, we know the price and we begin to honour Jesus' suffering.

John 3:16–18

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

2

JUSTICE VERSUS LOVE

Exodus 34:6-7

6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, 7 maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

The meaning of the word Grace: here the Hebrew word *chên* for grace

Strongs-Concordance H2603 *chên*

khane

Grace, i.e. subjective (kindness, favour) or objective (beauty): - favour, grace, gracious, pleasant, precious, favoured.

The word ***chên*** appears 69 times in the KJV.

Seen in a Biblical context, *chên* is the unmerited favour extended by one person to another or by God to an individual or all of mankind. In Exodus, 34:6-7 some of God's attributes are revealed.

*Merciful, gracious,
slow to anger and faithful.*

In Christian theology grace is the unmerited divine gift of unconditional love, favour, acceptance, forgiveness and of course salvation from God through Jesus to those who accept him as Messiah and Saviour (cf. Romans 5).

But this is too simple and does not reflect the core of the issue. Grace arises from a dilemma.

In order to understand the conflict and to resolve it, we have to delve a bit into Hebrew thinking to derive the correct Biblical understanding. Therefore we have to take a closer look at the roots of our Christian faith. We should be aware that the Christian faith has its roots in Judaism; originally Christianity was a Jewish sect.²

Romans 5:1-21

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; 4 perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still

² Sect (from Latin secta = Party, teaching, school of thought, paradigm) signifies a religious, philosophical or political direction and its adherents. The designation refers to groups which diverge from prevalent convictions through their teaching or rituals and often are in conflict with them.

Primarily a sect stands for a religious community, which split off of their parent religion. The originally neutral expression has been given a largely derogatory character due to its history and ecclesiastical usage, and since the 1960s it has been increasingly used in a negative sense.

sinner, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. 12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned-- 13 To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone's account where there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come. **15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! 16 Nor can the gift of God be compared with the result of one man's sin: The judgement followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ! 18 Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. 19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. 20 The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, 21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

In Jewish thinking, the loving mercy or grace is a tightrope walk between the justice and holiness of God. On the one hand they are God's character traits, his total and 100% justice and holiness. Other, also absolute attributes like love, graciousness and mercy are diametrically opposed to those. This is not grasped by man. For us humans con-

cepts like grace, faithfulness and forgiveness are more easily grasped, albeit with difficulty, in their absoluteness.

But we have to be aware of the fact that an attribute of God cannot be substituted to the detriment of the other. In other words: if God let your sin pass without atonement, he would not be 100% just and holy.

*This presents an irreconcilable conflict
To us humans.*

The great Jewish scholars explain that God created the world with the two dominant attributes justice and love.

Grace on its own, which has its origin in the *love* of God, would result in sin multiplying. However, God's justice would demand that he judge his creation and to bring it to justice.³

The New Testament says the following:

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the (free, gracious) gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jewish scholars say that God's *grace, faithfulness, forgiveness and mercy* are not granted automatically because that would upset the balance between *grace, faithfulness, forgiveness and mercy* on the one hand and *justice and holiness* on the other hand.

God's attributes like *justice, grace or mercy* can under no circumstances be reached by anyone. Human control over God's attributes is completely precluded. Therefore, not a single person can through "*human efforts in good works*"

³ *Talmud Genesis Rabba 12:15*

earn God's justice or grace. This is God's view on **our** good works:

Isaiah 64:6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

But that does not mean that we are simply freed from doing good works:

Ephesians 2:8-10

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

That's the secret. It is about works, but such as God has prepared beforehand. James once said that faith without works is dead.

James 2:20 and 26

20 You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?

26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

A question springs to mind:

Does the Old Testament teach justification works?

In the Torah and the prophetic books, the notion is described that the grace of God is released by trying to become more like God, by us doing acts of mercy (e.g. giving alms, taking care of the poor, widows and orphans, et al.).

In Jewish thinking this happens through “doing”, which opens the door to God's grace, mercy and forgiveness. By

contrast, in Christian thinking, this is attributed to faith so that grace and personal salvation is attained.

- *Jewish scholars say that we are to become more like God.*
- *The New Testament teaches us that we are to be changed into the likeness of Jesus as the Spirit of God desires. This means sanctification.*

But what or who, for that matter, is grace? Is it freely floating around in space? Is it an emotion? What is grace in actual fact? Let us always bear in mind:

Man is condemned to death through transgressions and sin. God is 100% just and holy.

- *His justice and holiness can in no way allow sin and transgression.*
- *But as HE is also love, goodness, and mercy - there is a dilemma.*
- *Therefore, grace is the conflict between justice and holiness on the one hand and love, goodness, faithfulness and mercy/grace on the other hand.*

And the solution to the conflict is:

- *Blood has to flow for the life is in the blood.*
- *Life originates with God. Hence, something „divine had to give its life“, had to die and to pay for our sin and transgressions.*

I. Sacrificial rituals in the Old Testament

Let us first take a look at optional as well as obligatory sacrifices in the law in order to gain a better understanding of the Hebrew sacrificial rituals and to put the sacrifice of the Day of Atonement into the right context.

A quick look at the various sacrificial categories⁴ brings clarity

- *The main offerings consisted of the olah or the burnt offering.*
- *Here the whole offering was burnt and not eaten at all. The word olah means ascent, and the idea behind it was that the person which brought the offering, would draw near to God through it. It had nothing to do with sin and therefore was never obligatory. This is the idea behind Romans 12:1, which tells us that we should offer our whole life to God.*

Romans 12:1

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, **to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God**—this is your true and proper worship*

- *Next, there was the peace offering, in which man thanked God for his engagement in the life of man.*
- *This offering was eaten on the altar – part was given to the priest, and the person bringing the offering ate the rest together with his family.*
Pesach was considered a peace offering; it was not considered a sin offering. The Talmud says that, when

⁴ Mark Blitz. "Decoding the Antichrist and the End Times" - page 111

the Messiah comes, this will be the only type of offering which will be brought to the temple.

- *The next type of offering was the chatat or the sin offering.*

The word chatat refers to unintended sin or sin due to ignorance through negligence and is not used for pre-meditated, wilful sin. Chatat could be offered for an individual or for the nation.

- *Premeditated sin was dealt with only on the Day of Atonement Yom Kippur.*

Forgiveness in the Torah was always achieved through a turnaround, the confession of sins, compensation and the plea for God's grace and mercy.

- *In addition, there was the guilt offering. A guilt offering was offered if someone was not sure if they had committed a sin; if later it turned out that a sin had been committed, the person brought the chatat sacrifice. With the guilt offering a punishment/fine was handed out on the basis of the event.*

- *Finally, there was the minchah offering or the oblation and libation offering.*

This was a food offering, representing the fruit of labour. Part of it was offered to God.

- *Yom Kippur: Festival on the Day of Atonement*

On that day, the Jews experienced the impact of the grace of God for the nation as a whole. Grace was literally led before their eyes through the sacrifice of two male goats.

The two male goats as a synonym for grace

On Yom Kippur, particularly the whole offering was brought to the temple; it was the only day on which the high priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies in the temple in order to receive forgiveness of sins in place of the people.

There, he sprinkled the atonement cover of the Ark of the Covenant with the blood of two sacrificial animals. A lot was cast also for the two male goats. The one on which the lot “for God” fell was sacrificed for the sins of the people. Over the male goat, on which the lot fell “for Azazel”⁵ all the sins of the people of Israel were publicly confessed by the high priest. Then, the animal “for Azazel” was killed by driving it over the rocks in the Judean wilderness. This is the origin of the word “scapegoat”.

- *Both animals had to die.*
- *The one is the sin offering for God on God’s altar before the tent of the meeting, and its blood was sprinkled on the atonement cover of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies.*
- *By contrast, the other animal was burdened with the sins of the children of Israel which it was returning to Azazel (Satan), the originator of sin itself, and it suffered death in the desert, though not through the shedding of blood but through violence by sending it over the edge of the rocks in the Judean wilderness.*

⁵ *Leader of the rebellious angels, Azazel is Satan*

Leviticus 16:5 – 34

5 From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. 6 "Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. 7 Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the tent of meeting. 8 He is to cast lots for the two goats--one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. 9 Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. 10 But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the wilderness as a scapegoat. 11 "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. 12 He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. 13 He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the tablets of the covenant law, so that he will not die. 14 He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover. 15 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. 16 In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the tent of meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. 17 No one is to be in the tent of meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until

he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel. 18 "Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. 19 He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites. 20 "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat.

21 He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites--all their sins--and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the wilderness in the care of someone appointed for the task. 22 The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a remote place ⁶; and the man shall release it in the wilderness. [...]

34 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites." And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses.

The male goats sentenced to death represent grace. Through the judgement carried out on the male goats sentenced to death God's justice was met year after year. Afterwards, the love and grace of God could unfold.

The miracle of the red thread

The people needed a sign from God that the sin offering had been accepted by him. God gave them a sign that HE had forgiven their debt. In the following this is described as the "miracle of the red thread".

⁶ A remote piece of land so that the male goat was unable to find its way back.

Originally, the temple priest put a piece of red thread at the entrance to the outer court. If it turned white after the sacrifice of the male goats, the people rejoiced, for their sacrifice had been accepted and their sins were forgiven. If the thread did not turn white, there was general sadness that the offering had not been accepted ⁷. Both priest and the people knew that God had not forgiven them their sins.

On Yom Kippur, all sins are forgiven. The uncleanness of soul and body, God forgave all of them on this day and liberated Israel from all of its sins.

On Yom Kippur the high priest publicly confesses the sins of the people, he asks for himself, his house, the priests and the holy place and the people for forgiveness, and through a particular red thread they know whether the high priest was successful.

The prophet Isaiah refers to this “thread” without naming it specifically. This was not necessary for the Jews. They knew how to interpret his words:

Isaiah 1:18

[...]. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

God legitimised the sin offering year after year through the miracle of the red thread. The Talmud ⁸ reported that this great miracle of the divine confirmation for the acceptance of the High Priestly offering, and with it the forgiveness of sins, ended already forty years before the destruction of

⁷ Source: *Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashahah 31b*

⁸ *Talmud. It is the canonized work of oral tradition of Judaism and it also is called the “legal code”*

the temple in Jerusalem. God's glory was no longer abiding in the temple, and therefore there no longer was the legitimation of forgiveness of sin through the male goats. The male goats no longer were able to bring grace.

The end of the Jewish High Priesthood

A Jew was supposed to tear his top coat from the top to the bottom, but the High Priest – and only he – from the bottom to the top. Jewish authors agree on this, starting with Rabbi Jonathan ben Usiel, a Tana⁹ of the first generation, student of Hillel the Older and a contemporary of Jesus, to Maimonides to Michael Creznach. In the emphasis on the difference in the gesture of rending the clothes it becomes visible that the Jewish scholars were well aware of the fact that their exception to the prohibition in Leviticus 21:10 in the end was against the divine order.

Leviticus 21:10

The high priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes.

Until Caiaphas no high priest had applied the assumed exception. It is decisive that Caiaphas, at the latest through the way in which he rent his garments, inadvertently signified the end of the old High-Priesthood.

De facto, the High-Priesthood ended with Caiaphas' rending his clothes in the night when he mocked Jesus, that was two days before Pesach, and with the rending of the temple curtain on Good Friday (one day before Pesach) and the failure of the red thread to turn white on Yom Kipur in September/October of the same year.

⁹ A Tana is a teacher of the law

Jewish tradition also confirms, albeit inadvertently, a connection between Jesus' death on the cross, the end of the temple in Jerusalem and the end of the animal sacrifices of the old covenant for the forgiveness of sin. In the year 30 the office of High Priest was transferred to Jesus Christ. At the same time, HE made himself the sacrifice through his death on the cross in order to atone for the sins of mankind and thus initiated the new covenant. In Him the High-Priesthood was made complete as true and eternal High Priest, who no longer came from the tribe of Levi but like the King of Salem and Melchizedek came from eternity. Thus, the Levitical priesthood was replaced by the eternal priesthood of Jesus. The fact that HE was crucified by the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple is no coincidence.

Hebrews 9:11-14

11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. 12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

However, as we can see, God did not give up his creation. HE brings into play another form of grace!

Himself!

Hebrews 10:1-3

1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason, it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. 2 Otherwise, would they not have

stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. 3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins.

II. In the New Testament – The incarnate glory of God

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:14

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:29

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

The Lamb of God is the grace

That’s the difference to other religions. Jesus is God incarnate and allows himself to be killed as a sacrificial lamb. Humanly speaking quite an absurd, crazy thought. But God’s thoughts are much higher than ours. They are attuned to the eternal target of creating for Himself a family, and HE cannot be separated from this target.

There is one thing we should not forget: in the New Testament it is just like in the Old Testament. The grace of God knows no automatism.

God grants grace exclusively at his conditions, and they are:

- *Recognize and acknowledge to oneself that a person without the sacrifice of Jesus is lost.*

- *Accept Jesus' sacrifice as an offered gift.*
- *As a result of this knowledge repent.*
- *Accept forgiveness.*
- *Be willing to lead a sanctified, God-fearing life.*

We have to be aware that redeeming grace is not a one-way street, God has done everything in his power to open for us the way back to him and HE desires that everyone should be saved. However, it is our choice whether we allow us to be saved. HE is willing to save everyone who wants to be saved. Unfortunately, not everyone wants to be saved, and in the view of God this is a tragedy.

The miracle of the red thread in the New Testament

In the New Testament we also need to have confirmation that our sins have been forgiven. It is the following:

- The Holy Spirit witnesses in our heart that we are God's children.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

- The pure conscience

Romans 2:15

They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.

Hebrews 9:14

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death,[fn] so that we may serve the living God!

Hebrews 10:22

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

- **Peace and joy**

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

This is what Jesus' sacrifice has achieved for us:

- *We are children of God, begotten not by the will of a man but by the Heavenly Father.*
- *Through Jesus we have eternal life in the presence of our Heavenly Father as a gift.*
- *It is already now that we are living no longer under the world's system, although we still live in the world, but we are citizens of heaven with all its blessings.*
- *Contrary to people who refuse Jesus, we know where we come from and where we are going. The answer to*

the question about our life's purpose is known to us. We are created to worship God in spirit and in truth.

- *Death no longer holds power over us for we are connected with life itself.*

3

WHAT DOES GRACE TEACH US

Both grace and faith are God's gifts. Without God's grace we would all be lost, for only those whom the Father draws to Jesus have a chance to recognize Jesus Christ.

John 6:44

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

For God decided that the way to the salvation of human-kind has to happen according to his standard. Therefore we cannot impress God with our performance nor with good behaviour.

Ephesians 2:10

*For we are God's handiwork, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance** for us to do.*

It can never be our works but only grace which opens the way to be changed into the image of Jesus.

Titus 2:11-13

*11 For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, 12 **training¹⁰ us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, 13 awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, (RSV)***

It is clearly written there what grace does for us, i.e. it brings salvation to all men and it trains us to renounce all godlessness and worldly passions and live sober, upright and godly lives, and this in today's godless times.

Hebrews 10:1

*For **since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. (RSV)***

The law reflects the real deal in a shadow image, which nonetheless is not the actual, detailed and coloured picture. Despite the fact that man offered sacrifices in line with God's law, the sacrifices were just a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus. God had never intended the animal sacrifices to make man forever complete, perfect, just and holy.

¹⁰ *Definition of training in the German dictionary: **Training** is teaching, or developing in oneself or others, any skills and knowledge or fitness that relate to specific useful competencies. **Training** has specific goals of improving one's capability, capacity, productivity and performance.*

Synonyms for "training": drill, exercise, practice, routine, workout, education, instruction, schooling, teaching, tuition, tutelage, tutoring, apprenticeship, centering, concentrating, focusing, riveting, fastening, equipping, fitting, preparing, qualifying, readying, seasoning.

Hebrews 10:2

*Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, **they would no longer have any consciousness of sin.** (RSV)*

For if, according to the law, the act of sacrificing had taken from man the consciousness ¹¹ of sin, they would no longer have needed a sin sacrifice because they would have been aware that they could stand before God's holiness without a bad conscience.

If by the law, which represented a shadow of the divine plan of salvation, it had been possible to cleanse man once and for all and to sanctify them, they would no longer have had to live under the consciousness of sin as they would be aware of this fact. The liberation from the latent, torturing presence of the awareness of sin or from being fixated on sin was reserved for the perfect sacrifice of Jesus.

Hebrews 10:3-4

*3 But in these sacrifices there **is a reminder of sin year after year.** 4 For it **is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.** (RSV)*

But as it is impossible that the sacrifice of animals takes away sins, the annual sin offerings served as a reminder of their sins. All the sacrifices were able to achieve was a foreshadowing of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus which covered the sins of the people but did not delete them.

A comparison we can understand

The offering of bulls and goats after God's law is like a tabletop on which there is a burn mark. The tablecloth

¹¹ *i.e. the consciousness that they are sinners and their sin were forgiven.*

can cover the burn mark but it cannot delete it, whereas Jesus' sacrifice returned the tabletop to its original state. Restoration, not covering, is the difference between the sin offering in the Old Testament and Jesus' perfect sacrifice.

Now we should ask ourselves what was God's will in this respect.

We should be clear about one thing: God wanted to show his people in the Old Testament that they could never stand before him on their own merits.

To achieve what the sin offering of bulls and goats was never able to effect – to set man free from the torturing of the present sin or from being fixated to sin, and to justify, to make us just and holy and to restore us in body, soul and spirit ... in short, to sanctify us.

Hebrews 10:9

... He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. (RSV)

He takes away the first, the animal sacrifices after the law in order to establish the second, the perfect sacrifice. For the first has no power to wash away the sin of mankind.

Hebrews 10:10

And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (RSV)

We are sanctified through Jesus' sacrifice, which was offered once and for all and does not have to be repeated. With a single sacrifice, HE once and for all redeemed all sins. With his sacrifice He made perfect those who are sanctified. Listen – sanctified and made perfect – i.e. we

are supposed to know who is sanctified, which are the following:

Hebrews 10:16

16 "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," 17 then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their misdeeds (lawlessness in German) no more." (RSV)

Through our works – no, God forbid – this has nothing to do with our actions and our abilities – only through Jesus' sacrifice the way of grace has been opened for us. For we are the pardoned sinner who would have deserved death, but because of Jesus' offering God could justify us.

Hebrews 10:18

Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. (RSV)

How wonderful is that? If we have been forgiven, there won't be any sacrifice for committed sin any more. We have been acquitted once and for all!

1 John 1:1

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life, (RSV)

HE is the eternal reality.

1John 1:3

3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (RSV)

Close fellowship, in which Jesus' very nature inevitably rubs off on us and in which we are transformed bit by bit into His likeness as the Spirit of God desires. We who accepted this message are living in fellowship with Jesus Christ, who leads us to the Father and gets us to our destination.

1 John 1:6-8

6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; 7 but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (RSV)

If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves because we say we do not need to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus. What is even worse, we say that we do not need to be saved because we are so good. Should someone think like this, they have been deceived and are on their way to ruin.

1 John 1:9

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (RSV)

However, if we come to realise that we are sinners and confess our sins to God, HE is faithful and just and forgives us of all our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:10

10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (RSV)

Should we say, though, that we have not sinned, we simply state that God is a liar and his word is not the truth and it does not apply to us.

1 John 2:1

1 My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; (RSV)

This so that you recognize that every man lacks glory which he should have before God. Doesn't the word of God say: "None is righteous, no, not one"? All of mankind without exception needs Jesus' cleansing blood for the forgiveness of their sins. There is no exception. No well-meaning person, no philanthropist, can boast that they don't need Jesus' salvation.

1 John 2:1b-2

1b but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

2 and HE is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (RSV)

However, should one of his children sin: doesn't the word teach us that "the righteous falls seven times" but always gets up again? The righteous know that they are just in God's eyes and therefore they get up, face their Heavenly Father, repent, receive forgiveness and are immediately reinstated into the rights of a child of God. God will not reproach us for our confessed sins, iniquities and transgressions; the blood of Jesus has power to atone for sins, iniquities and transgressions and to make the sinner righteous. God sees our potential and wants to bring it to full maturity under all circumstances and to release us.

1 John 2:3-4

3 And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; (RSV)

This is the ultimate sign that the truth brings our life into the light.

1 John 2:5

5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: (RSV)

This is the truth about our state. He who keeps His word, and by this, I mean God's word and the laws¹² valid for us as heathen Christians and those of love, in him the love of God has been made perfect.

1 John 2:6

He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. (RSV)

Those who say that they follow Jesus as his disciples are also obligated to live their lives in such a manner as has been laid down in God's word, in other words living in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control and in the fear of the Lord. For the fruit of the Spirit to grow, we have to look into his glory with unveiled face, i.e. with an open mind, and thus we will be changed into the likeness of Jesus as the Spirit of the Lord wants.

This is and remains the crux of our life in faith. This is where believing in the grace of God comes into play:

¹² Abstain from offerings to idols, idol worship, the eating of blood, abstaining from meat from strangled animals, not committing fornication

Hebrews 10:2

*Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, **they would no longer have any consciousness of sin.** (RSV)*

We have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus from our sins, why should we still be conscious of our sins or be tortured by being attached to sin?

God wants us to live in freedom for which Jesus has paid a high price. For his word clearly says that whom the Son has set free he is free indeed. Set free of what?

Free from the consciousness of sin or from being attached to sin

So does this mean that from now on everything happens automatically and that I don't have to do anything anymore? Absolutely not!

For grace teaches us that, because we were allowed to experience grace, we are also exposed to the impacts of grace, which are:

- Recognition of the truth
- Obedience to what realized truth teaches us
- To follow the commands of truth.

Jesus *Christ* is the truth. Does not HE say of himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life." This means that HE is the way who through truth leads to life. This is what grace teaches us.

A brief summary

In the summary, I want to briefly summarize the mentioned points.

1. *God wanted us to be taught by his grace to leave the ruinous paths of sin and to turn to him full of gratefulness because we have realized our lost state and that we were caught in the net of the slavery of sin, and the resulting judgement of death and that we have understood it.*
2. *God does not want us to continue living in a permanent consciousness of sin or attachment to sin but that we have been redeemed from the slavery of sin by Jesus. Through him we have died with him to sin, and sin as well as the consequences of sin; death no longer has a right on us. The Son has set us free and we are free indeed.*
3. *God wants us to look to him and to be certain that HE leads and guides us with his Holy Spirit and brings us to the finishing line.*
4. *His grace brings us to a turnaround. Should we sin – HE does not cast us out but waits that we turn to him in humility and confess our sins so that HE can cleanse us from all unrighteousness. However, it would do us good to take note that*

**Grace without transformation is
perversion of divine grace ...**

... i.e. grace without our willingness to be changed has nothing to do with the planned impact of God's grace and therefore is
Pure perversion of grace.

5. *God does not reproach you nor does HE remind you of sins, iniquities and transgressions confessed to him. HE forgave you unconditionally. The blood of Jesus has the power to not only cover sins and their entanglements but to redeem them. To redeem means to render null and void. God has fixed his eyes on the potential lying dormant in you and regards you as cleansed and made just by the blood of Jesus because you humbled yourself before him and confessed your sins. HE wants to make the potential HE laid into you to come to full fruition.*
6. *We are called to preach the glad tidings of grace to lost mankind and to tell them that God loves them and that HE has opened a way to himself through Jesus Christ. It is up to every individual person to make a decision. But how can they make a decision if they have not heard the liberating message.*
7. *According to his grace, the Holy Spirit equips every one of us to serve in power and authority if only we are willing. HE doesn't need the educated ones; HE just needs the willing persons, those that are fully committed to him to be equipped. As always when God has planned something, it is HE who equips, enables so that no man can boast to have achieved something out of himself. HE watches jealously that HE gets all the glory. HE is not willing to share his glory with another.*

4

DELIVERED FROM MISERY

Romans 1:9

For God ... whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son

...

It has helped me a great deal to understand his statement in the letter to the Romans, what Paul wrote in Romans 1:9. This is also the resolution of our dilemma of how to deal with our fleshly nature. Therefore, keep this verse in mind for the following considerations.

Romans 6:1-2

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Paul explains to us that, if we are dead, how could we still hold on to something. A dead person just that: dead. He is not driven by any craving and sins, contrary to the living. He is dead and there is no life left in him. Just like a dead person is dead, we are dead to sins and their cravings.

Romans 6:4

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

This really is quite simple: just as we were baptised into Jesus' death, we – our sinful being – were buried with him through baptism, like Jesus we rose to sanctified, new life by our heavenly father.

Romans 6:5-7

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him so that **the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 **For he who has died is freed from sin.****

Through baptism, we were made like him in death as well as in resurrection. We have risen to newness of life with Him and in Him. If by crucifying our old man by uniting in death with Him, our body was freed from the effect of sin; therefore, there is no reason to serve sin any longer. For we have died to sin. No lifestyle, no lust, no craving including those of sin has power over a dead person any more.

Let us note:

We died with Christ – because HE is risen, we will also rise with him to new, eternal life. And just like death no longer has any right on Christ, for HE, as we, died to sin. And death no longer reigns over him, and by consequence, no longer over us either as we died with him to sin. Just like him, we live for God who has born us again to newness of life.

Romans 6:11

So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The question remains how this is to happen, after all, I know myself. I know my mistakes, I know about my sinful being which keeps breaking through in my life. We simply have to know that **our spirit¹³ is born again, but not our soul and our flesh.¹⁴**

We are spirit, have a soul and live in a body. And precisely that is our problem. Now the verses in Romans 7, which are often so difficult to understand, become clear to us.

Romans 7:14

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

The law is spiritual and thus instituted by God; by contrast, man was sold to sin through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Just like slaves, including their children and grandchildren belonged to the slave owner; we were sold to sin as slaves.

Romans 7:15-16

15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.

These verses are the key to understanding Paul's statement. I don't approve in my spirit of what I am doing, although I am doing what I don't want to do ... in my spirit I

¹³ "Spirit" here means the spirit of God whom the believer receives and under whose dominion he lives; his life is determined by the spirit of God and no longer by the flesh. He is "in the spirit" and walks "according to the spirit", although he can still act "in the flesh" at times.

¹⁴ "Flesh" means the body of man, his mortal-bodily existence on earth and, related to that, the sinful attitude and being. "According to the flesh" means: being dominated by the sinful nature according to the character of sinful man.

agree with the law which judges my behavior. And my spirit regards the law as holy and good.

Romans 7:17

As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.

Because my Spirit is born again, even in situations where my soul - sold to sin, unredeemed, and not yet sanctified - sins, and at the same time my born-again spirit agrees with the law and condemns my carnal desires, it is not my spirit that sins but my not-yet-sanctified soul and my unredeemed flesh.

Romans 7:18-24

18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. 21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

I do not do the good thing I actually want to do, but the exact opposite that I hate is what I do. Consequently, it is not my redeemed, born-again spirit who does this, but my flesh-being bound to sin which is in my limbs. According to my born-again Spirit, however, I cling to the law of God.

Romans 7:25

*25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! **So then, I myself** (falling back on myself) **in my mind am a***

slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Romans 8:1,5

*[There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**
5 Those who live according to the (character of the) flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the (character of the) Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. (KJV)*

Romans 8:13

*For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; **but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.***

This is and will remain the crux of our faith life. Faith in God's grace comes into play. God wants us to live in the freedom that Jesus has bought us dearly, because his word tells us that whom the Son has set free is free indeed. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, wrote Romans 7 and 8 so that we can put the conflict and ambivalence to which there seems to be no solution into proper context. We simply have to be aware that we serve God in our spirit.

Once the Holy Spirit gives us clarity about this fact, it liberates us **from the permanent awareness of sin or being fixated onto sin**. We serve God in our born-again spirit, and occasionally it so happens that our unredeemed fleshly being intervenes and rebels against our willing and God-devoted spirit.

HE by no means wants us to concentrate on committed but forgiven sins, for if we should do so we obstruct the godly future prospects.

Does this mean that from now on everything happens automatically and that I no longer have to take care of any-

thing? Not at all! Have we not already dealt with the objective and purpose of grace? Grace teaches and instructs us. By being able to experience grace, we are also exposed to the effects of grace, which are: to know the truth, to obey the recognized truth, to follow the laws of truth.

Now all we have to do is find out who or what the truth is? Indeed, the truth is Jesus Christ. Does HE not say of himself: "I am the way, the truth and life?" So HE is the way that leads to life through truth. That is what grace teaches us.

Grace has recently been proclaimed improperly. I am not talking here of misunderstood, cheap grace, but of divine grace, which shows us the way to life like a navigator. If we allow ourselves to be taught by grace, this is the divine aspect of grace; however, if we believe we can remain as we are because of the proven grace of God, we are dealing with misconceived grace, an ear-itching, seductive message that ultimately leads to our ruin, because we are not prepared to let ourselves be changed into the image of Jesus.

Romans 6:12

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

We are to regard as fact that sin no longer can reign in and through our body with sinful desires. Only we determine in the end whether we give in to sinful desires or resist them. We no longer have to sin as Jesus has set us free from the enslavement of sin. We can freely decide whether we give in to the desires of our mortal body or not. The gist is:

*You determine what you do
And bear the consequences*

Of your decisions

Romans 6:13

*Neither yield ye **your members [as] instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God**, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members **[as] instruments of righteousness unto God.** (KJV)*

Paul asks us not to use our members as instruments of unrighteousness but to use them in service of righteousness for God.

Romans 6:14

***For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.** (KJV)*

It is because we live under grace and are taught by it that we are no longer under law which condemns us but under grace which makes us free and holy and presents us perfect before God – and this in body, soul and spirit. This is what it means to be perfect in the sight of God.

Romans 6:15-16

*What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, **that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are** to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (KJV)*

Paul here clearly draws a line: can we continue sinning because we no longer live under law but under grace? Of course we can. But HE also clearly shows us the consequence of our action, i.e.: “Whom you obey, his servants you are”.

According to this it is impossible to persist in our sinful habits and to fall back on grace and to love as if nothing had happened.

We need to consider this:

We can only fall back on grace if we are also willing, and I mean that we have really decided to repent over our latently existing, sinful habits

- *Receive forgiveness and also accept it*
- *Step over the past*
- *Let ourselves be changed into the image of Jesus through the power of grace bestowed upon us.*

Romans 6:17-18

*But God be thanked, **that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart** that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then **made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.** (KJV)*

Once we all were slaves to sin, but we have become obedient to truth – Jesus’ word – according to the model which we find in his word and which is confirmed to us through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we became servants to righteousness.

This is Paul’s appeal to radicality in the new life, a life in which the Holy Spirit leads into holiness. Just like we formerly sinned to the fullest, we now are to invest ourselves in the service of righteousness.

As slaves of sin we had no obligations to righteousness, which reigns in God’s kingdom. Therefore, Paul shows us

the final consequence of enslavement by sin ... its end is death.

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Romans 6:22-23

*22 **But now being made free from sin**, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

*23 For the wages of sin [is] death; **but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (KJV)***

By turning to Jesus, we were released from the dependence on sin with the end result of being transformed into the image of Jesus. So that we cannot be robbed of the divine perspective “the eternal life in Jesus Christ”. Constantly keeping before our eyes, the fact that the enemy of our souls will always try to separate us from grace. Our battle is not one with human means for it is a battle of faith over truth which is fought in our minds. So, whom do I believe, whom do I allow to lead me, truth or lie? Let’s not be seduced by Satan’s perfidious, old but nonetheless very effective harassment.

“Did God really say?”

If God said something in His world, HE means what HE said, for HE says what HE means and HE means what HE says. His word is truth, and it leads us to life eternal.

5

THE GIST

The underlying problem in our relationship with God is our latent, repeatedly rising aim for independence.

Our unholy, soulish part keeps interfering by rebelling against our willing spirit. Our soul wants to be independent of Him in order to realize itself. To shape our way as it sees fit. We forget that without relying on God and His divine values, we have no ethical, moral points of orientation or reference. We lack the inner navigator that leads to life.

In order to draw our attention to this problem, God has given us laws in the Old Testament, and in the New Testament HE meets us with grace. However, without his intervention, neither are promising for us.

In spite of the shown grace, we must never forget one thing: as in the Old Testament God showed the people of Israel through the sin sacrifices, which was to be repeated every year, that the victims, in spite of the law's directive, could not ultimately redeem Israel, and God wanted to show them that only HE could justify them. That's what also happens to us. The Holy Spirit also shows us that without his intervention, we have no chance of completing the path victoriously.

Paul highlights this in Romans 7

... *“O wretched man that I am ...”*.
“Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

... The dilemma in which mankind finds itself is only intended to bring us to the point that we recognize that without God's intervention we are unable to make it on our own. This then leads us to recognize that without His intervention we are lost.

This knowledge prepares us to become willing to exclusively in faith refer to his word and to fully and completely give up our independence from God because we realize that we are unable to make it on our own.

Giving up our independence is the only prerequisite to enter into a living relationship with God. This seems to be an easy step, but its consequence is that we once and for all forgo our own agenda and unconditionally surrender to Jesus' will.

Matthew 11:29-30

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke [is] easy, and my burden is light. (KJV)

Our freedom begins when we take his yoke upon us and our soul finds rest. Then we no longer have a problem in being changed in the image of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

If, being aware of what we have gone through together, we would have to answer the question: what does grace teach us? We can answer it ourselves.

Which is exactly what God tried over the centuries to teach mankind that, independently of our culture, religious education and family background, we are unable to be saved apart from him.

*This is
What grace teaches us*

Thank God that He, Jesus, redeemed us. By entrusting ourselves to him and let the Spirit of God change us into Jesus' image, as the Spirit, the Lord, wills.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bibles

- NIV 1984, Copyright C by International Bible Society, Published by Hodder & Stoughton Limited
- KJV from BLB Institute
- RSV from BLB Institute
- Young's literal Translation

Lexicons, Commentaries and Dictionaries, Books

- Lexikon zur Bibel Fritz Rienecker und Gerhard Meier - Brockhaus Verlag Wuppertal (Bible Dictionary)
- Duden Bedeutungswörterbuch 3. Auflage 2002 (Explanatory Dictionary)

- Duden Herkunftswörterbuch 4. Auflage 2007 (Etymological Dictionary)
- Wahrig Deutsches Wörterbuch (German Dictionary)
- Babylonian Talmud
- Gray's Commentary
- Matthew Henry Concise Commentary of the whole Bible
- Jamison, Fausset and Brown Commentary
- Blitz Mark "Decoding the Antichrist and the End Times"

B.

**OTHER BOOKS
BY
ROLF E. KEUSEN**

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

BY ROLF E. KEUSEN



Even though a lot has been said and written about the topic of “forgiveness”, the book by Rolf Keusen offers unique and important insights, which every Christian should not only know but also practice. Different from all other religions, the God of the Bible offers Christians the unmerited gift of forgiveness. If we wanted to, we could forgive others any debt, receive forgiveness ourselves and enter through this into a life of complete freedom.

Practiced forgiveness is the key for healed and good relationships, for a life of freedom, healing and authority. Although forgiveness is part of biblical teaching, many Christians do not take it seriously and they do not practice it. The psalmist says:

Psalm 103:

‘...who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.’

When we forgive, then God forgives us also, and the way for inner and physical healing is opened. This has an effect on our marriages, family and throughout all of our relationships. We forgive others and our relationships will be restored.

On the other hand, if we don’t forgive that which was done to us or if we don’t ask for forgiveness of those we have wronged, then Satan has the right to attack. Possible points of attack are: sickness, sleep problems, depression and much more. This is clearly illustrated in the story about the servant in Matthew 18.

The worst would be that we decide NOT to forgive – because then God can NOT forgive us our trespasses either. God has committed himself to His word to forgive, when we forgive. That is why the theme of “forgiveness” is decisive in realising a life of freedom.

We are thankful to Rolf Keusen that he has written down all the connections in clear, comprehensible and profound ways. We believe that this book will release a great blessing and much deliverance to those readers who will take it to heart. We approve that this topic will be discussed in such clarity one more time.

Jesus says: “Blessed is he who listens to his word and obeys.” We wish that this book causes you to be a listener and doer of HIS word. It will bring deliverance and healing in many areas of your life.

Dr. Christoph Häselbarth

All books can be ordered here:
Keusen-Ministries
Im Buchenhain 35
63225 Langen

E-Mail: rolf.keusen@t-online.de

Back of the Cover

Rolf E. Keusen

is a Swiss national and he has been living with his family in Germany since 1986. He has been married for over 50 years with Erika, they are parents of two grown children and four grandsons.

- He is a founding member of Healing Rooms Germany and for years has co-founded and served in Healing Rooms.
- He served as pastor of a large protestant free church in Frankfurt for more than ten years mainly in the field of church growth and church supervision.
- As director in the Mission Organisation “Christ for all Nations” he was responsible for the establishment of the organisation’s headquarters as well as for day-to-day operations.
- Before his call to Germany, he had a leading position in a multinational US company.

One focus of his ministry is the holistic healing in teaching and practice. He is an author, speaker at conferences and seminars in Germany and abroad.

This book deals with the issue of grace. Lately, I was very busy regarding the widespread phenomenon of wrongly understood grace. The key topic is:

- What grace really is
- The price that had to be paid
- What grace teaches us
- What grace liberates us from

These are aspects of grace, which not even long-standing Christians are all that familiar with, which, if adhered to, we can experience an unimaginable liberation from thoughts of condemnation, self-accusation, doubt of Jesus ‘love and we experience what Jesus has promised us:

“For whom the Son has set free, he is free indeed”.