



GRACE MESSENGER

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THE CURSE OF RELIGION: DYING WITHOUT GRACE (Taken from the book *Forty Days to Inner Spiritual Strength, Meditation 11*)

A unique distinctive of Christianity is the reality that all men will die twice. Like the creation of the original man, every man will die a natural death simply because he experiences a natural birth. In the original creation of man, "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Simply because man was formed with a flesh and blood body he will die. Man does not die this natural death because of sin. He dies because he was created with a physical body.

One thing is certain in the world of creation, all things created die. God (who does not die because there is nothing in God that can die for the essence of God is spirit) brought into existence a being that is not eternal by the act of its beginning. The fact that it had a beginning declares that it is not eternal. It also is not eternal because the actual act of its creation makes it to be of a substance that is not God therefore it does not have

life within itself. The act of its creation decrees that it will die.

Every man will not only die a natural death he will also die a spiritual death. Like the fall of the original man (Gen. 3), every individual who is born into this world experiences spiritual death through his own fall. As the Scripture has said, "All men have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). It is also written, "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*" (Rom. 5:12). Spiritual death comes to all men because all men have sinned.

Every man has the nature of sin not because of the lineage of Adam. Sin occurs in ones life because every man sin as Adam, the first sinner, sinned. As a normal child develops, a necessary and vital ingredient of that development is the progression of his mental capacity to discern what he perceives to be good and evil. Although some
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would perceive this to be a bad thing, as the original man in the Garden of Eden eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, yet it is a necessary thing for man eventually to be able to know, to discern the goodness of God. Just as wickedness comes out of goodness, goodness comes out of wickedness.

Every man is born, dies spiritually, and then eventually dies physically. But, man has the opportunity to be reborn spiritually. He can live the days of his life being controlled by the dying realm of his physical existence or he can experience the living realm of the spiritual being that dwells within him. The wages of sin, that which you earn in the physical realm, is death, but the gift of God, that which can be yours in the spiritual realm, is life. Man does literally die without grace.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, contrasts this death in sin to the life that is in holiness with: *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Rom. 6:21-23)

Throughout the powerful chapters of Romans five, six, seven, and eight, the theme of death

and life are consistently contrasted against each other. The comparison begins in chapter five with *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”* (5:10). In the verses that follow in chapters five to eight; twenty-four of them carry this same contrast ending with *“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live”* (Rom. 8:13). Obviously, this interweaving of the issues of death and life is fundamental not only to these chapters but to the very essence of what it means to be Christian, what it means to be human.

It is interesting to note that throughout the intricacy of the death and life issue in these chapters is a third element, the law. It is in this scheme that religion plays its deadly scenario. Paul states it rather bluntly with *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound . . .”* (Rom. 5:20). The law, or more accurately the misappropriation of the law, makes things worse.

In these powerful chapters, death and law are closely associated. It begins with the previously mentioned verse: *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life*

Christianity is experiencing the intimacy of Jesus Christ in relationships with others.

by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:20, 21). It continues with *“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace”* (Rom. 6:14).

Prior to this statement, Paul gives the powerful truth of why Christians can live the victorious sin-free life. A truth, sad to say, that most Christians of the twentieth-first century do not believe to be possible, at least in this life. Nevertheless, Paul states that because the believer has been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, *“. . . sin shall not have dominion over [the Christian]”*(6:14). Then, Paul makes the statement that most casual readers of the New Testament pass over, or at best pause briefly to ponder its connection, *“. . . for ye are not under the law, but under grace”* (6:14).

If man is not under the law, a legitimate question can be raised: *“What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? . . .”* (Rom 6:15). Paul takes the next fourteen verses to explain why he

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gives a resounding "God forbid"(6:15) to that question. Basically, Christians do not sin, even though they are not under law; because they ". . . now being made free from sin, and become servants to God . . . have [their] fruit unto holiness . . ." (6:22). Paul adds that it is the believer's oneness with Christ that produces holiness and keeps him from sinning: ". . . ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;. . . married . . . even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (7:4). By being baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Christian who receives ". . . abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness . . ." (5:17) lives the sin-free life of holiness: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (6:14).

(Continued next month)

THOUGHT AND PRAYER FOR TODAY

Heavenly Father, I realize that it is my own mind that strives to know what is good and what is evil so that I, myself, in my own capability can control my life. Without the capability to know, I could never recognize and appreciate the God that you are. But, I also know that capability gives me the susceptibility to live in my own knowing and thereby attempt to create many acts of religious goodness. I have come to realize that my religion will kill me. Deliver me from my self-righteousness that I might experience your righteousness. Jesus live in me, let your grace flow through me, and let your Spirit control me. Jesus you are my life.



Self-Disclosure of God

If man cannot "find out God" by his own seeking and searching, then any knowledge of God that is acquired by man has to come from God's own revelation of Himself. If God had never chosen to reveal Himself, man could never have come to know God or anything concerning Him. Paul wrote, *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him. neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:9-16)*

For man to acquire any knowledge of God, God has to be the giver of that knowledge.

In other words, man learns of God as he encounters God through the disclosure of God. God has revealed Himself in a self-opening out of His being. This is the statement of John when he wrote, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). If it had not been for the coming of Jesus Christ, the ultimate revelation of God, mankind could never have come to "know him that is true . . . the true God." Although man cannot find out God by his own searching, he can know God because God chose to reveal Himself by His grace.



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A Personal Note from James



In all of my articles, CD, videos and books, I share the simple truth that Jesus is breaking through to me at the moment. In that sharing, I pray that in some way God can break through to those who hear the same truth. I know that if He does . . . it will not be because I have taught anyone anything.

What "I" teach will have absolutely no lasting value to you. It cannot produce the life that you so desperately crave. Only by hearing Jesus yourself can you experience the life you desire. Truth comes only to those who hear Jesus themselves.

It has become very simple for me. Every man must hear Jesus and be taught by Jesus if he wants to learn of Jesus. Perhaps, Paul said it as well as it can be said:

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Rom. 11:33-36)

The revelation of Jesus Christ comes 100% from Jesus revealing Himself to you.

Thank you for renewing your subscription to continue receiving this monthly newsletter. All I can do is share what Jesus is revealing in my life. As I share, my heart's desire and prayer for you is that you, too, can hear Jesus in what is being shared.

Dr. James Stone

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The good news of God is the coming of Jesus into this world. It is His life, His teaching, his death, His resurrection, His ascension, and His coming into the life of the believer.

Ultimately, the good news is that man can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, a personal relationship with God Himself.

Christian Ministries exists solely to help all people experience the fullness of the manifestation of Christ in their life.

Weekly CD:

Barry and Jennifer with their children, Kaitlyn Grace & Gabriel James



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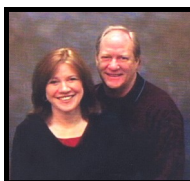
Contact Barry Shepherd
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We encourage you to share these CD's with others in your community to increase discussion of what the Lord is revealing in your lives.



FORTY DAYS TO INNER SPIRITUAL STRENGTH: Meditations in the Grace of God

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Meet the Editors: Dale and Joy Simpson

Our prayer for you is that the life of the Spirit would enable you to hear the mystery of the Word in this newsletter. We believe the Lord is revealing how the gospel of Jesus Christ is setting us free from ourselves.



All International Pastors or Missionaries please reply to this email address:
nyagali@gmail.com

God bless you today! Dale and Joy Simpson

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Please seek the Lord if you would like to help sponsor a group or an individual to have access to this opportunity. For More Information Contact:

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