

ID series – looking at our identity as a church and our core values – those things that are important to us and that we value the most, the things we **believe** that shape **who** we are, **why** we do things, our direction – **where** we are going; **what** we do towards seeing our vision fulfilled and **how** we go about it. Today we're looking at No.6 in our series – Why Grace?

In Hebrews 6:2, the writer talks about being sure that we have grasped the '**elementary truths of God's word**' in order to establish **good foundations** for us to move on to **maturity** as believers. As we've seen in previous sessions of our ID series, he gives six foundations (in corresponding pairs) that we need to be sure we have in place in order to build our lives strongly as individual Christians and together as a church.

We have looked at four of the six foundations listed in Heb 6:2. There are two more foundations that at first glance look a bit strange: '**Resurrection of the dead**' and '**Eternal Judgment**'. They actually sound more like something to do with the end of the world, and although they are, the implications that flow from them have a **foundational bearing on our lives** as Christians. (*Certainly the Bible teaches that at the end of the world we will all be raised from the dead and will all have to stand before the judgement seat of Christ, and there are some comments about that at the end of your notes*). But first let us see how these **two doctrines** are **fundamental to our faith** and need to be established firmly in our lives.

### Resurrection from the Dead

As we saw when we looked in ID3 at the foundation about **baptism**, baptism is a demonstration of our **old life being buried** and then of us being **raised with Christ** to live a **new life**. From having been spiritually dead, God causes our spirits to come alive to him. He gives us a **new heart and spirit** that **loves what is right** and is **opposed to sin**. This renewed spirit that God sees as inextricably identified with the resurrected Christ is **the true 'us'**. Any desire to sin that we experience is not that real us, but there are the remains of habits, belonging to our old **sinful nature** that our bodies have become so accustomed to. By the power of the Holy Spirit at work in us (as we saw in ID4), God wants us to bring our **bodies and our minds into line** with the **desires of our renewed spirit** so that we will no longer want to satisfy the old desires still hanging around in 'our flesh'. The Bible states again and again as a **spiritual fact**, that God sees us as having been raised to new life in unity with Christ, and if we can truly grasp this by faith, we can establish this spiritual foundation which will help us to live as people who are **living in resurrection life**.

### Eternal Judgment

We saw in I.D.3 that each of the foundations in Heb 6:2 are in complementary pairs, so as well as the foundation of having been raised to new life with Christ, we also need to understand that we have been **set free from the consequences of eternal judgement** that we would otherwise face if we hadn't turned to Christ.

*2 Corinthians 5:21 - God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

All God's awful judgments against us and our sin were poured out upon Jesus on the cross. An incredible exchange has taken place – God has swapped your sin and mine for his Son's perfect righteousness! How does that work?

Justice demands that a price is paid for sin and Jesus, the perfect Son of God, has taken the full penalty for our sin upon himself, thus satisfying God's justice completely. God's eternal judgment was poured out on Christ once and for all. Amazingly it means that if we are united with Christ through our faith in him, we can no longer be condemned or judged; even if we do sin we can no longer be judged for it. It's a key foundation of our faith that we need to grasp. **YOU have been set free from the consequences of eternal judgement!**

**Grace**

This is what is called **GRACE** – God’s **undeserved favour** towards us. We owed God a massive crippling debt, but in grace the Lord has wiped it out utterly and completely. But grace goes even further than this. Amazingly we now find all Christ’s righteousness is now credited to our account, so much so we could never make any significant reduction in it however much we were to sin.

However, it can take many of us a long time to truly grasp the implications of these foundation stones for us on a day-to-day basis. Can you relate to this experience:-

You know that **God has met with you** in a way that has **changed you** at the core of your being – being **born again, renewed by the Spirit of God** from the inside. But you go through times of feeling that you need to do more to please God, and feeling that some of the time he’s not pleased with you, that you need to **try harder** to earn his acceptance – you know that he’s definitely a loving heavenly father, but it seems that sometimes he’s got a frown.

Like many Christians, I was like that for some years after coming to faith. I knew that my sins had been **forgiven** when I came to Christ, that **when I confessed my sins** to God, he freely **forgave** me, that I was a **child of God** and had been accepted into his family, that I had assurance of a **heavenly home** with him at the end of my earthly life. But, it was as though there was a gap between the beginning of my journey of faith and it’s end. Like those familiar statements in school reports, there was a whisper in the background – ‘could do better’; ‘must try harder’.

Then, the more I heard about this amazing thing we call God’s Grace, gradually the ‘penny began to drop’ as to my true **standing** before God.

*Romans 5:1-2 (NIV) - Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup> through whom we have **gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.** And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

It’s all about our **POSITION** before God – not our **PERFORMANCE** – our **standing** before him is as a result of what Christ has done for us, not out of merit or our own efforts to obey the moral law.

Terry Virgo in his book ‘God’s Lavish Grace’ expands on a **picture of marriage** Paul uses in Romans 7 to give a graphic illustration of how believers are set free from trying to please God through keeping the moral law. *(Read marked passages p16-19.)*

What then was the point of God having given the law? It was to show that law is powerless to give us the ability to keep it, it merely highlights our failure to do so (ref. the story of the OT).

*Galatians 3:24 - The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be **justified by faith.***

- **‘Justified’** – most often used in everyday language in the context of ‘justifying ourselves/our actions’ – making ourselves look **as though we’re in the right**; that in a court of law, justice would rule in our favour.
- ‘Justified by faith’ – where God sees us as righteous because of our faith in Jesus, where God sees our faith as inextricably connecting us with his perfect and righteous Son. Justified = **‘Just-as-if-I’d never sinned’!**

Quote Terry Virgo p25. *‘The law does not come to save us but to show us our need of a Saviour. Satan wants to trick us into trying to prove ourselves holy by the law which God gave to prove us sinners. **The law came to rub it in. Jesus came to rub it out!**’*

TV p29 *‘You will never reign in life and be free from the clouds of condemnation if you do not wholeheartedly embrace the **free gift of righteousness.** You need to enjoy the glorious liberty of being a child of God, thoroughly accepted, not on the basis of your present performance as a law keeper, but thoroughly on the basis of **his gift of the righteousness of Christ fully reckoned to your account.**’*

Philip Yancey in his book 'What's So Amazing About Grace' gives a definition of what God's grace is all about by saying - **'Grace means that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more – and grace means that there is nothing we can do to make God love us less'**

The evil one, the accuser, will still try to condemn you for any failings. That's why Paul says in Ephesians 6 that we need the defensive armour of **'the breastplate of righteousness'** to guard our hearts from his efforts to condemn us. We must **stand** securely in the clear **fact of scripture** that we truly have been justified by faith in Jesus, and refuse to allow Satan to sway us by our feelings.

*Romans 8:1 - There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Now, the **question** that might well come to mind is **'If God's gift of righteousness is so free, couldn't that lead to a careless attitude to sin?'** This is a very valid question - and the amazing thing about the astounding span of God's grace, which is so full and so free, is that the answer could be 'Yes!'. We **could** be careless with God's grace if we don't truly grasp what it cost Jesus to give it to us.

This is where we need to be clear on the difference between two great theological terms – **JUSTIFICATION** – and **SANCTIFICATION**.

We've already seen that **we are justified by faith**, made righteous in God's sight. No 'ifs' or 'buts' about it – that's what God has told us through his word – the Bible – which has been tested through the ages and we can rely on it (ID2).

To be **sanctified** is to be purified, to be made holy, to be consecrated; **set apart for God to use**.

The amazing thing about Grace is that we can be justified without being sanctified; we can be sure of our eternal salvation as a result of God's grace towards us, whilst remaining **unsanctified** and therefore **unavailable** for God to use us for his kingdom purposes. Could we remain that way? Well, it's possible. But Paul picks up this question in Romans 6:-

*Romans 6:1-2 (NIV) – 'What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? **By no means!** We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?'*

"By no means" – JB Phillips translates it **'What a ghastly thought!'**

Would any of us really want to just say "Thank you God for your grace and the assurance it gives of salvation for the next life, but I won't get too committed to church life as I'd rather live just as non-Christians do, putting the pleasures of the world at a higher priority, compromise my faith, a little immorality won't hurt etc." We could! But as Paul says "No way!", "What a ghastly thought!"

No!, We have a powerful motivation to respond to God's gift of Grace. If we **really grasp what Jesus has done for us, GRATITUDE and LOVE for God** can't help but well up within us, totally **transforming our motivation** from one of carelessness to **wanting to give of our best in worship to God**.

We should also be aware that there are **CONSEQUENCES** of not living our lives God's way. Life doesn't work properly without him at the centre and the consequences will sometimes be **painful difficulties**. Let's turn away (repent) from that kind of lifestyle.

**God has got GREAT PLANS for us.** - *Ephesians 2:10 - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

God wants us to live fruitful lives for him; he's even made plans in advance about good things he'd like us to do to build his kingdom and to be a blessing to others.

### Heavenly reward

There's another fact of scripture that can help to motivate us, and that is understanding the difference between **'salvation'** and **'HEAVENLY REWARD'**. If we've trusted Jesus to be our saviour, our salvation is assured and we will enter God's presence when our earthly lives end. This will be a place filled with the glory of God where our joy will be complete, worshipping in his presence.

But Jesus also had a lot to say about there being a **reward in heaven** for those who devote themselves to **serving God wholeheartedly** without seeking earthly recognition, for those who serve the poor and disadvantaged, for those who **endure persecution** for their faith and for all who **serve God faithfully** to the end. Paul tells us that the things we do for God from pure motives **really count**.

*1 Corinthians 3:10-15 - Each one should be careful how he builds. <sup>11</sup> For no-one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup> If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver and precious stones, or wood, hay and straw, <sup>13</sup> his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup> If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. <sup>15</sup> If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.*

I'm convinced that salvation, even in the circumstances just described there, will be absolutely wonderful in comparison to our earthly lives - but I don't know about you, but I don't want to **'suffer loss'**, escaping eternal judgement 'by the skin of my teeth'. I earnestly long to hear **"Well done, good and faithful servant"** when I enter God's presence. Don't you?

*Titus 2:11-13 - For the **grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men. <sup>12</sup> It **teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** <sup>13</sup> while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

Let's say **'No!' to cheap grace!**

### Life in the Spirit

Now we all know that our humanity, these bodies of ours and the thoughts and desires that we often have, can pull us in the opposite direction to our desires to please God. So where can we get the strength to overcome this pull that is opposed what God has done for our spirits within us?

*Galatians 5:16 - So I say, **live by the Spirit**, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature/flesh.*

Jesus has poured out the Holy Spirit upon his people. As we saw in ID4, when we invite the Holy Spirit to flood our lives, we can be empowered to live lives that are holy and glorifying to God. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) will characterise our lives. We no longer need to live in a cycle of trying our best to please God, then failing and being disillusioned.

- In Romans 8 Paul talks about **'the glorious freedom of the children of God'**.
- In Galatians 5:1 he says **'It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.'** (Sin enslaves).
- In 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 - Now the Lord is the Spirit, and **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.** <sup>18</sup> And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into his likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

God loves you! He loves you more than you will ever be able to grasp! He knows all about your weaknesses – that's why he's given you freedom from law which can never impart life to us. He has given his Spirit, to live through you so you can confidently take hold of your standing as a much loved child of the living God and learn to live in step with the Spirit, saying 'No' to sin and being 'transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory'.

### **The Law and Grace**

Paul says that if the Spirit leads us, we are not under law but under grace. Rom 6:14-15, Gal 5:18. The Spirit empowers us to live out what the law requires by writing it in our hearts. Heb 10:16. External rules and regulations that we lay on ourselves or on others amount to legalism, which is a deadly killer. Living by grace, not by law, is the only way to live upright and godly lives. Law is such hard work, grace brings such freedom! By continually being filled with the Spirit and living our lives in

step with the him, we can put to death old habits and stop practicing them. This last foundation, the fact that we no longer need fear 'Eternal Judgment' and realisation of God's grace is a wonderful foundation to be laid in our lives that destroys legalism.

### **Our Permit**

When God looks and sees all these wonderful foundations well laid in our lives he can issue a building permit for us to build on this foundation. This building is a life of ongoing repentance and faith in God, a life where the old has gone and the new has come; a life full of God; a life where we serve the purposes of God in holiness and godliness and in boldness and confidence. It is a dynamic active lifestyle, expressing faith in God, not a passive or negative or legalistic or fearful lifestyle. If God is for us who can be against us! Imagine living life like this! Our foundations are laid, look out world here we come!

### **The End of the World**

The Bible tells us that Christ will one day bring this sin-polluted world, as we know it, to its end and all who been raised with Christ to live a new life will then experience a physical **resurrection from the dead**. This is the culmination of God's amazing **grace**, for rather than having to face the horrors of **eternal judgment** for our sins and being eternally punished, we will go to be with the Lord and will live forever with our amazing new resurrection bodies on a glorious new earth, where the curse will have gone for ever and there will be no more sin, sorrow, sadness, suffering, pain or death! Christ will be the centre of it all.

There are more details about what the Bible teaches in the appendix that follows these notes, for your own study. By its nature the subject draws many into speculation about how the world will end, the future of Israel and the nature of the thousand years of Rev 20. Speculation and disagreement, often with unpleasantness and censoriousness are rife in this whole area. Paul commands us not to engage in useless speculation - it is playing in the devil's playground. 1 Tim 1:1, 6:3-5, 2 Tim 2:23. At ABC we will stick to clear certainties and read prophetic scripture in the light of these, and not the other way round.

We are to wait patiently and expectantly for the Lord Jesus to return as he said he would, knowing that because of his **grace** we have nothing to fear. We will not be condemned when the Lord comes back, but will be welcomed into his presence forever. And while we are waiting, we can hasten his coming by spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ to all who do not as yet know him. 2 Pet 3:12

*"For the **grace of God** that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." Titus 2:11-14*

### **Appendix:**

#### **Some Principles for Interpreting *End Time* scriptures.**

Our presuppositions determine our beliefs. Here are six important biblical principles that we need to bear in mind when reading passages about end times.

1. God's intention in giving us information about the end of the world is to encourage us and give us a sense of hope and proper expectation. 1 Thess 4:18, 5:11, it is to forewarn us of difficult times and protect us from false prophets, Matt 24, and to keep us from being shaken by all the speculative views that will inevitably be propounded. 2 Thess 2:1-3. Too often popular teaching about the end of the world is put across in such a way that makes believers fearful rather than filled with excitement, encouragement and hope.
2. God did not tell us about the end times for us to draw up time charts of future events and to try and guess who antichrist is! All such speculation brings confusion. We can be clear on the plain straightforward statements of scripture and do not need to speculate.
3. *Apocalyptic* passages use images we can relate to to describe events we cannot imagine. How could people in the times of Isaiah or Christ have understood the technology of today's world? No more could they or we understand events leading up to the end of the world. So pictures are painted and familiar images used to describe unimaginable future events. e.g. The concept of separating sheep and goats is an agrarian image. It illustrates what will happen but it does not tell us what will actually happen. We get glimpses, not definitive descriptions. This is the way all prophetic visions need to be read.
4. We begin with the plain, unambiguous statements before looking at the more graphic prophetic passages. These are found mostly in the epistles, where we are given the broad picture, outlined below, to encourage us.
5. The Bible is about Jesus, we must fix our eyes on him. John 5:39, Heb 12:2. Daniel became so preoccupied with the

fourth beast in his vision (Dan 7) he kept asking the wrong questions. Instead of being encouraged by his glorious vision of the Son of Man, he focussed on the beast and became greatly alarmed and went pale. Let us not make his mistake.  
6. Most prophecy about end times will only be recognised **after** the events have actually taken place, as we see with Jesus' first coming.

**Some certainties about the End of the World**

1. God has a plan that he is working out in human history. Acts 1:7, Eph 1:10
2. It is not for us to know times and dates yet there will be signs of the times.
3. Conditions on the earth will get worse as the end gets nearer. Luke 21:8ff
4. There will be an increase in antichrist, lawless & demonic activity. 2 Thess 2
5. There will be deception both in and outside the church. Matt 24:24
5. Times will be difficult for believers who will be persecuted. 2 Tim 3
6. But for our sake these times will be cut short Mar 13:20
7. The church will be purified and united prior to the Lord's return. Eph 5:27
8. The Gospel will be preached to every people group. Matt 24:14, 28:18-20
9. Near the end millions of Jews will turn to Christ. Rom 11:25-16
10. We are not to worry for God will be with us and help us. Luke 21:15-18, 28
11. Just before the Lord returns we will know his coming is close. 1 Thess 5:4
12. Christ will physically return 'in the clouds of heaven' with hosts of angels.
13. All dead believers will rise from the dead and join him as he appears.
14. All living believers will be caught up to meet him in the air.
15. Believers will all get new 'resurrection' bodies. 1 Cor 15:51-58
16. He will bring to an end all the lawlessness on the earth. 2 Thess 2:8
17. This will all be a total shock to non-believers. 1 Thess 4:13-5:3
18. The whole earth and all upon it will be burnt up with fire. 2 Pet 3:7-11
19. Dead unbelievers will rise and be thrown into a fire. Jn 5:29, Matt 25:41
20. Christ will hand everything over to his Father. 1 Cor 15:24
21. We will be rewarded for how we lived our lives. 2 Cor 5:10, 1 Cor 3:13
22. God will create a glorious new heaven and a new earth. 2 Pet 3:13
23. In this new world there will be no more death, sorrow or pain. Rev 21:4
24. So we will be with the Lord forever in eternal glory. 2 Tim 2:10

**Hallelujah and Amen!**