

Streams of Grace – Pt. 2 – Streams for the Christian

(Isaiah 44:1-6)

INTRODUCTION:

1. That God offers us His grace despite our abundant, sinful, flaws is amazing. But that God offers us **flowing streams of grace** is almost incomprehensible!
2. Yet, in the first lesson on this subject we considered how His grace **flows** through Jesus Christ.
 - A. To do that we considered the biblical record of events in the lives of two men, Zaccheus and Bartimaeus, and their similarities and differences, and how their determination to see Jesus resulted in their experiencing God's grace streaming into their lives.
 - B. In both cases, however, we noted that to receive God's grace they had to contact Jesus, as one must do with a stream of water, to benefit from it.
 - i. For, water that flows way over there is of no value in quenching my thirst if I am here.
 - ii. So, to benefit from God's grace one must make contact with it.
- 3. Today I want to focus on the **streams of grace** mentioned in **Acts 2** that God has provided for the **saved**, or those who are in Christ's body, the church!
 - A. Acts 2 begins with the first Pentecost after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension and the preaching of the first gospel, or good news, sermon by the apostles.
 - i. Their message of **salvation by grace** in Christ began fulfillment of God's promise to "pour out His Spirit," which we just read about in Isaiah being described as **streams** and **springs of water flowing** from God on the earth resulting in abundant life (Isa. 44:1-6; 32:9-20, etc.).
 - ii. The fulfillment of these O.T. prophecies meant:
 - a. The Messianic kingdom had been established (Acts 2:22-35).
 - b. That salvation, kingdom citizenship, and the times of refreshing promised by the prophets was now available to all through Jesus (Acts 2:36-41; Acts 3:19).
 - B. Acts 2 also speaks of what followed for those saved in Christ (Acts 2:42 – "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.").
 - i. It is this part, the things that characterized the life of the saved, that I want to address.
 - ii. For, it speaks of what early Christians **devoted themselves** to, which was the **apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer**.
 - iii. I believe they did this because, as the Bible will show, **through these things God's grace can and did flow into their lives**.
4. So, let's talk about these streams of grace and how and why they should be part of our lives.

BODY:

- **I. Stream 1: God's voice:**
 - A. They **devoted** themselves to the **apostles' teaching**.
 - 1. To **devote** (προσκαρτερέω, proskartereō): **Vine** – to be earnest/serious towards (something), to persevere, be constantly diligent,...to attend (give self to) continually; **Mounce** – to persist in adherence/observance to something; to be intently engaged in something
 - a. Early Christians were serious about the apostles' teaching being part of their daily lives.
 - 2. They did this because the **apostles were God's mouthpiece**.
 - a. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would reveal to them all truth (John 16:12-14).
 - b. Jesus commissioned them to teach His commands to all nations (Matt. 28:18-20 – "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.").
 - c. Thus, the early church understood that the apostles' words were God's words (1 Thess. 2:13 – "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, **you accepted it** not as the word of men, but for what it really is, **the word of God**, which also performs its work in you who believe.").
 - B. Thus, like the early church, we should be devoted to the apostles' teaching **because**...

- 1. Through them **Christ has spoken to us** (1 Cor. 14:37 – “If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I **write** to you **are the Lord’s commandment.**”).
- 2. God’s grace bringing great blessings flows into our lives.
 - a. It builds us up and gives us our divine inheritance (Acts 20:32 – “And now I **commend you to God and to the word of His grace**, which is **able to build you up** and to **give you the inheritance** among all those who are sanctified.”)
 - b. It brings salvation and instructs us in righteousness (Tit. 2:11-12 – “For the **grace of God** has appeared, bringing **salvation** to all men, ¹² **instructing** us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ **looking for the blessed hope** and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus”).
- 3. Their teaching is deserving of our devotion (Psa. 19:7-11 – “The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. ¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”)
- 4. By their words we stand approved to God (2 Tim. 2:15 – “Be **diligent** to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately handling the word of truth.**”).

C. So, brethren, if you want God’s grace to flow in your life, then take time to hear God’s voice through His word revealed in the Bible, whether it is by 1) a set reading time; 2) a reading partner; 3) listening during commuting; 4) using a Scripture journal to read and write down your thoughts, etc., do what it takes to make that stream of grace flow into your life.

• II. Stream 2: God’s Ear

- A. They devoted themselves to **prayer**.
 - 1. They did this because such devotion is Christ’s will for His people:
 - a. Rom. 12:12 – “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, **be constant in prayer.**”
 - b. 1 Thess. 5:16-18 – “Rejoice always; ¹⁷ **pray without ceasing**; ¹⁸ in everything **give thanks**; for **this is God’s will for you** in Christ Jesus.”
 - 2. They also did this because through prayer God hears the desires and requests of His people (Phil. 4:6 – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”).
- B. We should also be devoted to prayer because:
 - 1. **Blessings** from God **flow** into our lives through prayer.
 - a. Paul was blessed through the prayers of others (2 Cor. 1:10-11 – “He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹ You also must **help us by prayer**, so that many will give thanks on our behalf **for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.**”).
 - b. Paul regularly prayed for God’s spiritual blessings to come to his brethren (Eph. 3:14-19 – “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”).
 - c. Jesus taught that we should pray to God to “**Give** us this day our daily **bread**” (Mt. 6:11).

- 2. Sins are addressed through prayer (Jas. 5:16 – “Therefore, **confess your sins** to one another and **pray for one another**, that you may be **healed**. The prayer of a righteous person **has great power** as it is working.”).
- 3. Prayer can bring relief from physical distress:
 - a. Paul’s imprisonment (Phil. 1:18b-19 – “...Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that **through your prayers** and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ **this will turn out for my deliverance**”).
 - b. Bring God’s peace (Phil. 4:6-7 – “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by **prayer** and supplication with thanksgiving **let your requests be made known to God**. ⁷ And the **peace of God**, which surpasses all comprehension, **will guard your hearts** and your **minds** in Christ Jesus.”).
- 4. Prayer helps us spread the gospel, the good news (Col. 4:2-4 – “**Continue steadfastly in prayer**, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, **pray also for us**, that **God may open to us a door for the word**, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ **that I may make it clear**, which is how I ought to speak.”).
- 5. If we desire the grace of God to flow in our lives, we must be devoted to prayer, daily and often seeking God’s grace for our lives and for others.
- 6. So, whatever can help you grow in prayer, whether it is by 1) praying the prayers of the Bible; 2) writing down your prayers in a prayer journal [maybe checking off things you see fulfilled]; 3) determining a daily focus of your prayers throughout the week; 4) having a prayer partner; 5) praying through the church directory, etc., know that **God’s grace flows into our lives through prayer!**

• III. Stream 3 – God’s People:

- A. They were devoted to **fellowship**.
 - 1. **Fellowship** (κοινωνία, koinōnia): **Mounce** – “partnership, participation, sharing”; **Vine** – “participation, to communicate (-ation), communion”
 - 2. This commitment was from the start (Acts 2:44-46 – “And all those who had believed were **together** and **had all things in common**; ⁴⁵ and they began selling their property and possessions and were **sharing** them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶ Day by day **continuing** with **one mind in the temple**, and **breaking bread from house to house**, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart”).
 - a. They recognized they shared something special in Christ—a special bond, a special hope, a special way of life, etc., resulting in very close-knit community.
 - b. So, naturally they sought to come together and share in worship and service to Christ, while also continuing this sharing outside their assemblies, eating together with gladness in one another’s homes!
 - c. And, when needed, they willingly shared their possessions with one another with great generosity and sacrifice!
- B. God’s grace flows through fellowship. For, devotion to **one another in fellowship**:
 - 1. Provides **love** and **honor** (Rom. 12:10-11 – “Be **devoted to one another in brotherly love**; **give preference to one another in honor**; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”).
 - 2. Promotes **spiritual wellbeing** (Gal. 6:1-2 – “Brethren, even if anyone is **caught in any trespass**, you who are spiritual, **restore** such a **one** in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ² **Bear one another’s burdens**, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”).
 - 3. Produces **truthful communication** and **graceful conflict resolution** (Eph. 4:25, 31-32 – “Therefore, laying aside falsehood, **speak truth each one of you** with his neighbor, for **we are members of one another**...³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² **Be kind to one another**, tender-hearted, **forgiving each other**, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”).

4. Promotes the proper **value** of one another (Phil. 2:3-4 – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **regard one another as more important than yourselves**; ⁴ do not merely **look out** for your own personal interests, but also **for the interests of others**.”).
 5. As we can see, fellowship, true devotion to God’s people, provides many avenues by which God’s grace can flow into the lives of God’s people.
- C. We must fellowship through **membership** in the local church.
 - 1. The gospel produces local churches.
 - a. The gospel preached resulted in the churches of **Galatia** (Gal. 1:2), churches of **Rome** (Rom. 16:3-5), the local church at Philippi with its elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1), etc.
 - b. Being members of one of these local churches was how Christians fellowshiped in the worship and work of Christ (Acts 6; 11:25-26; Phil. 4:15-16).
 - 2. God’s grace flows through the design of the local church.
 - a. God’s grace is in the **spiritual help, guidance, and accountability** we all need, which is found in the local church.
 - i. Acts 14:23 – “When they had **appointed elders for them in every church**, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
 - ii. Heb. 13:17 – “Obey your **leaders** and submit to them, for they **keep watch over your souls** as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be **unprofitable for you**.”
 - b. God’s grace is given and received in our assembling together (Heb. 10:23-25 – “Let us **hold fast the confession of our hope** without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; ²⁴ and let us **consider** how to **stimulate one another to love and good deeds**, ²⁵ **not forsaking our own assembling together**, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging one another**; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”).
 - c. God’s grace is found in the worship of the local church (1 Cor. 14:26 – “What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. **Let all things be done for building up**.”).
 - i. We see it in singing (Col. 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom **teaching and admonishing one another** with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”).
 - ii. We see it in our coming together for **fellowship** in the **breaking of bread**, or the Lord’s Supper.
 - 1) The local church assembles each Sunday to partake of the Lord’s supper (Acts 20:7).
 - 2) This is to be a special fellowship together in the Lord’s death and resurrection (1 Cor. 11:20-21, 23-26, 33-34 – “When you **come together**, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk...²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is **my body**, which is for you. **Do this in remembrance of me**.” ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This **cup is the new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me**.” ²⁶ For as often as you **eat this bread and drink the cup**, you **proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes**...³³ So then, my brothers, when you **come together** to eat, **wait for one another**—³⁴ if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.”).
 - d. So, not surprisingly, Christians seek to **join themselves** to the **disciples** and their work for Christ (Acts 9:26-28 – “And when he [Paul] had come to Jerusalem, **he attempted to join the disciples**. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them

how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.²⁸ So **he went in and out among them at Jerusalem**, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord.”).

3. If you want God’s grace to flow in our lives, you **need to be a member**, to be in fellowship, with Christ’s people in the local church. For, it is by God’s design that through our dedication to and involvement in this collective that we gain His blessings and fulfill our God-given duties to the Lord and our brethren.

CONCLUSION:

1. I hope you have been encouraged to **devote yourself to God’s word**, the apostles’ doctrine revealed to us in the N.T., to **God’s ear** reached by **prayer**, and to **God’s people** through the **fellowship** we have with one another in Christ, knowing that God’s great grace flows to us through these.
2. Of course, as we said from the beginning, the grace that flows from these things is offered to those who come to Christ seeking salvation by grace through F-R-C-Bp.
3. So, if you are outside of Christ, or you have not lived faithfully to Christ though you once entered Him, you are outside of God’s stream of grace and need to respond to the gospel today. Will you come!