

3 GOOD WORKS UNDER GRACE

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INTRODUCTION

We were made new creatures in Christ Jesus for good works 2 Corinthians 5:17, "For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God **prepared beforehand** so that we would **walk in them**" Ephesians 2:10. These are good works of grace because God Himself prepared them beforehand, just like our salvation. Our Christian life is a life of continual good works Matthew 5:16, a wonderful way of life, a life of goodness "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law**" Galatians 5:22, all these flowing from Christ who is in us. These good works are included in the package of Grace and have been prepared in advance by God Himself just as our salvation, that we should walk into them when God places them before us Ephesians 2:10. It is clear that we must be attentive to the **promptings of the Spirit of God in our conscience** when God places before us these good works. This is simple and more convenient, because it will be a stimulus from inside of us, which is easier than seeking verses in a Concordance. The Spirit is more at hand than the letter because He is **in** us "if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law" Galatians 5:18. "But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we **serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter**" Romans 7:6. God dwells in our conscience. That is why we, believers, are exhorted to live in the Spirit and to walk in the Spirit Galatians 5:25. It's that simple, the will of God comes from our conscience. The conscience **makes us know** the will of God. A person who is lead by the Spirit does not follow his feelings but always asks himself this question: what do **I know** I have to do, what does my conscience tell me? We do not need to know the whole Bible by heart, because we have the Spirit of Christ in us and Jesus promised to guide us from within and teach us all things. Remember the early Church did not have a written New Testament yet; they were guided by the Spirit in their consciences. We should not live in the oldness of the letter but in the new way of the Spirit, that unfortunately most believers ignore 2 Corinthians 3:6.

A. GRACE PREPARES FOR US THE GOOD WORKS

1. **Ephesians 2:10** Good News Translation (GNT)

10 God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has **created us for a life of good deeds**, which he has **already** prepared for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God **prepared beforehand** so that we would **walk in them**.

Ephesians 2:10 New Living Translation (NLT)

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so **we can do the good things he planned for us long ago**.

Not only did God create us in Christ to do good works, but He also prepared them beforehand and would like us to do them. And as if this was not enough, He also gives us the **willingness** and the **capacity** to do them:

Philippians 2:12-13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have **always obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **13 for it is God** who is at work **in you**, both **to will and to work** for *His* good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13 Good News Translation (GNT)

12 So then, dear friends, as you **always obeyed me** when I was with you, it is even more important that you obey me now while I am away from you. Keep on working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation, **13** because **God is always at work in you** to make you **willing and able to obey** his own purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13 Living Bible (TLB)

12 Dearest friends, when I was there with you, **you were always so careful to follow my instructions**. And now that I am away you must be even more careful to do the good things that result from being saved, obeying God **with deep reverence**, shrinking back from all that might displease him. **13** For God is at work **within you**, helping you **want to obey** him, and then **helping you do** what he wants.

2. This is grace. God gives us both the **wanting** and the **help to obey** His will. This is the great Promise of the Father:

Ezekiel 36:27 Living Bible (TLB)

27 And I will put my Spirit within you **so that you will obey** my laws **and do** whatever I command.

Ezekiel 36:27 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

27 I will put My Spirit within you and **cause** you to walk in My statutes, and you **will** be careful to observe My ordinances.

What Paul is saying is: *"obey because it is not difficult, God in his grace gives you both: the wanting to obey Him and the power to do it"* **so...try it with fear and**

trembling to complete your salvation! This means: "as it is all by grace, do it carefully because the grace to obey is part of the package of God's Grace." The experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit is to enable us to do the will of God and please Him, not just to speak in tongues.

B. HOW DO WE KNOW WHICH ARE THOSE GOOD WORKS?

1 How do we discern which are the good deeds God prepared us for and gives us the willingness and the power to do them? The Holy Spirit will teach us all things John 6:45. He will remind us what pleases God John 14:26. He will lead us John 16:13 and put in front of us the opportunities to do these works Colossians 3:17,23. The Holy Scriptures are also a catalogue of good works through the teachings of Jesus and His Apostles. Of course, as the primitive Christians couldn't walk around with the Scrolls of Scripture under their arms because they did not exist yet, and once they had them not everybody could have a copy. Neither can we walk around with a concordance under our arm to know where the verses are for each situation. We must learn to distinguish the voice of God's Spirit in our conscience Romans 8:4, Galatians 5:16 which is even faster than finding the right verse on our smart phones Roman 9:1; 1 Timothy 1:5. This is the way to live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit and be lead by the Spirit under the New Covenant Romans 8:14.

Our minds must be continuously alert and inclined to discern the will of the Spirit of God in our conscience until it becomes part our **character, our way of life and our continual attitude to live and walk in the Spirit and be guided by the Spirit**. We also have to discipline ourselves to always obey this inner intuition with a firm and continual attitude of obedience to the opportunities for good works presented to us within the family, school, work place and with our neighbors, to do the good deeds and favors which God has prepared for us. This is the best way to witness. Actually, love is essentially helping others, not just a romantic feeling. The obedience to the Holy Spirit is the guide from our consciences. The examples and commands of Jesus and the Apostles in the Scriptures are a general menu or catalogue of good works that we can do. But it is letter, it is stone, it is paper, it is ink. You cannot have the whole Bible present in your mind to check the long list of good works to find the one you have to do in a specific moment. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is the most practical way of doing the good work in any given situation, even if you have not read the whole Bible. Our continual desire and the ability to do what the Spirit guides us is the evidence that we are saved and are filled with the Spirit of Christ who guides us. This is the life under grace!

What makes grace different from the Law of Moses or any other law, civil or religious, is that the human laws command us from outside to do something that usually arouses the rebellion of our sinful nature Romans 7:5. This is why it is a great effort to obey and the temptation to disobey is often stronger, because prohibition gives more power to sin 1 Corinthians 15:56. But grace, although exhorting us to obedience and working out our salvation with zeal and fervor, clarifies that it is **God Himself** who produces in us the desire to obey and gives us the ability to do God's good works Philippians 2:12-13. In addition these good works were already prepared by God beforehand Ephesians 2:10, and God will put them in front of us when the time comes to do them. He even allows us to decide to do them or not. If we do them, He will reward us in Heaven. If we don't do them, we will not have rewards in heaven, but we do not lose our salvation 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

2. Before we continue with our lesson on good works, let's take a moment to meditate on what grace is!

1. God prepared beforehand the good works He wants you to do.
2. When the time comes to do them, He impresses it in our conscience.
3. When we wish and decide to obey, He gives us the will to do them with joy, and
4. Gives us the ability to do them. This also includes our desires to be pure, honest, Holy, love our neighbor and do works of charity, all this is easy under grace. If we take advantage of all the opportunities God places before us, and He gives us the willingness and ability to perform them, and on top of all this grace
5. God still promises us special and eternal rewards 1 Corinthians 3:11-14, then why not do them?

This kind of life under grace will be a living testimony to all those who are in contact with us as well as give us happiness and a sense of fulfillment. All of this depends on believing God's promises, experiencing them and practicing them 2 Peter 1:3-4. When we start by faith to practice His promises, the grace of God develops in us Christ's divine character. The life of obedience to the Spirit in us and good deeds will be the most natural thing to us and becomes an intrinsic part of our character 2 Peter 1:5-15. This is all by grace because God decided it so beforehand Ephesians 1:4-6, Ezekiel 36:27, Jeremiah 31:33.

C. ALL THIS, AND MORE, GOD'S GRACE WILL DO IN US

1. By grace He gives us a new heart, meek, gentle and obedient.

Ezekiel 36:26 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

26 Moreover, I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:26 Good News Translation (GNT)

26 I will give you a **new heart** and a **new mind**. I will take away your stubborn heart of stone and give you an **obedient** heart.

2. By grace His Spirit in us will motivate us to obey:

Ezekiel 36:27 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

27 I will put My Spirit within you and **cause** you to walk in My statutes, and **you will** be careful to observe My ordinances.

Ezekiel 36:27 Good News Translation (GNT)

27 I will put my spirit in you and **will see to it** that you follow my laws and **keep** all the commands I have given you.

3. By grace He writes his law in our conscience:

Jeremiah 31:33 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "**I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God**, and they shall be My people.

Note that God says: "**I will put** My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes" and "**I will put** My law within them", not the Law of Moses. God did not write in our hearts the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, but the corrected and abbreviated law that Jesus gave us to be sure we are God's children Matthew 5:21-48, Matthew 5:48. Observe and meditate carefully that Jesus said with utmost clarity and emphasis that "**all the law and the prophets**" are summarized with a single commandment: "*love God and neighbor*" Matthew 22:37-40, and "*treat others as you would like to be treated*" Matthew 7:12. Also Paul affirms that love, or the fruit of the spirit, "**fulfills all the law**" Romans 13:8-10. In other words, the grace promised by the Father in His eternal and new Covenant not only abbreviates the Law and the Prophets but **replaces** them with the fruit of the Spirit! Placing it within us to make it easy for us to achieve a life of holiness. Beloved: let us acknowledge, admire, revere and be thankful for this invention of God: **His Grace**, which is given to us on a silver platter.

4. By grace the Fruit of the Spirit produces the character of Christ in us
2 Corinthians 3:18 and overrides the law:

Galatians 5:18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

18 But if you are **led by the Spirit**, you **are not under the Law**.

Romans 8:9 Good News Translation (GNT)

9 But you do not live as your human nature tells you to; instead, you live **as the Spirit tells you to**—if, in fact, God's Spirit lives in you. Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

What a difference! By his grace, "*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*" which is the character of Christ is in us and makes us partakers of his divine nature:

2 Peter 1:3-7 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

3 Seeing that His divine power has granted to us **everything pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. **4** For by these He has granted to us His **precious and magnificent promises**, so that **by them** you may become **partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. **5** Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply **moral excellence**, and in *your* moral excellence, **knowledge**, **6** and in *your* knowledge, **self-control**, and in *your* self-control, **perseverance**, and in *your* perseverance, **godliness**, **7** and in *your* godliness, brotherly **kindness**, and in *your* brotherly kindness, **love**.

His grace gives us everything we need for our material life and for our spiritual life. The way to achieve it is also by trusting His promises, because "*The righteous shall live by faith*" Romans 1:17. So to experience this grace, we must believe His promises which are "**precious and magnificent!**" just as we did for salvation. This life of faith in the grace of God will make us **partakers in the nature of God!** Imagine! Peter then tells us what will happen to us if we believe these great and valuable promises:

2 Peter 1:8-15 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

8 For if these **qualities are yours and are increasing**, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For he who lacks these *qualities* is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brethren, be all the **more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you**; for as long as you practice these things, **you will never stumble**; **11** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you. **12** Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been established in the truth, which is present with *you*. **13** I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, **14** knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. **15** And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to **call these things to mind**.

How important is this passage from **2 Peter 1:3-15**. Think about it several times. What I underline or put in bold is to make you meditate on these words. To only read the Scriptures is not enough. We need to meditate on them. God's Word is not only to be read but also to meditate on Psalms 1:1-3. Please note all that is available to us since we received this glorious salvation and were filled with the Spirit of Christ:

Galatians 5:22-25 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control**; against such things **there is no law**. **24** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

What a pity that when we minister the Promise of the Father, we emphasize the gift of the Spirit of speaking in tongues instead of the fruit of the Spirit to receive **love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control**. The fruit of the Spirit forms in us the character of Christ and is the evidence that we are filled with Him so we can achieve everything that Peter says.

Speaking in tongues **is not evidence** of having received the Holy Spirit, but a physical **sign** that something supernatural has happen to us. It is not the evidence of the inner filling. The gifts of the Spirit are **not evidences** but **signs** Mark 16:17, 1 Corinthians 14:22, Acts 4:30. I repeat, the Fruit of the Spirit **is the evidence** of being filled with the Spirit. Jesus does not say 'by your **gifts** you will know them' but "*by their **fruit** shall you know them*" Matthew 7:16. Think about the difference between **evidence and signs**. The Gifts of the Spirit are not evidence of spirituality. Performing signs, like miracles, healings, prophecy, casting out demons are worth nothing in themselves, unless we have the fruit. It is the fruit of the Spirit that shows who we are because it is the character of Christ in us that states we are His.

Matthew 7:22-23 Living Bible (TLB)

22 At the Judgment many will tell me, 'Lord, Lord, we told others about you and used your name to cast out demons and to do many other great miracles.' **23** But I will reply, 'You have never been mine. Go away, for your deeds are evil.'

1 Corinthians 13:1-2 Living Bible (TLB)

13 If I had the gift of being able to speak in other languages without learning them and could speak in every language there is in all of heaven and earth, but didn't love others, I would only be making noise. **2** If I had the gift of prophecy and knew all about what is going to happen in the future, knew everything about *everything*, but didn't love others, what good would it do? Even if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, I would still be worth nothing at all without love.

Speaking in tongues does not say what kind of believer a person is; it is the character of the person that counts. If the Fruit of the Spirit would have been emphasized instead of tongues, there would be no legalism in the Church, but spirituality Galatians 3:1-3. With the imposition of hands we should pray that the Spirit fills to the point that the believer starts flowing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Then the world would have been different and everyone would be Pentecostal. But we give the diploma of "Spirit-filled" to a believer when he speaks in tongues...! Without the fruit of love, then languages, prophecies, etc. are nothing but noise and nothing else 1 Corinthians 13:1, 14:8-9. The Fruit of the Spirit, not the gift of tongues, is the fulfillment of the law, the prophets and all the commandments Matthew 22:40, Matthew 7:12, Romans 13:8-10, Galatians 5:22-23.

The Fruit of the Spirit is not as the Law of Moses, which forces us from the outside, which bothers us and arouses our rebellion Romans 7:5. Grace is not an external coercion requiring us to comply under severe threats, but a mild stimulation by the Holy Spirit from inside of us that works when we believe the promises of the Lord. God Himself, from the inside out leads us to want to obey and achieve. *"It is God who works in you both to want and to do, for his good pleasure"* Philippians 2:13, but **does not force** us. We have to decide because we are not robots.

It's like modern cars. The old cars years ago had no power brakes or power steering. Braking and steering depended on applying a lot of external human force. It was almost impossible to move the steering wheel with a stationary car. And to stop we had to push the brake with great force and even then it took some time and distance to stop. Then they invented the power brake and power steering. Now we can handle the steering wheel with a very light movement and barely touch the brake to stop because the engine does the hard work. Even more, today they are making cars that can avoid accidents and can even drive and park themselves electronically.

So it is with Grace. Grace is the engine of our life, the steering wheel, accelerator, and brakes. If we so chose grace will guide us, "causing" us to know when to accelerate, slow down, brake, turn and even lead our lives. All the resources are in us through Christ Philippians 4:13. The more we understand grace the less effort and more safe we will be. But we, the car, must follow the guidance of the Spirit in our consciences and the Spirit will gently help us do God's will if we decide to do it. It's easy, try it! To obey the conscience is to do what **we know** we have to do and not what **we feel**. Paul is an example of being a person who walked in the Spirit

"10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." 1 Corinthians 15:10

5. By grace God puts his law within us and writes it in our hearts to make us know what is his will. When we decide to obey, an inner natural desire, not an obligation imposed from outside under threats, will help us do it. We are not a people of the book or the letter, receiving orders from outside, as Israel, 2 Corinthians 3:6, but a people guided by the Spirit of God in us Romans 8:5-9, 14, 26 which stimulates us and leads us from inside. He said: **"I will be their God"**. Jesus should drive our lives!

Jeremiah 31:33 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will **put My law within them** and on **their heart I will write it**; and **I will be their God**, and they shall be My people."

6. By grace He promised to guide us by His Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

13 But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will **guide you into all** the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

Romans 8:14 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

7. By grace He promised to *"teach us all things"*. That is why under grace, we are encouraged to always live in the Spirit because He is the source of our ideas and the force to act upon them:

"The Holy Spirit will teach you all things" John 14:26, *"The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth"* John 16:13 and his Apostles urge us to *"be guided by the Spirit"* Galatians 5:16, *"walk in the spirit and live in the Spirit"* Galatians 5:25, *"Be fervent in Spirit"* Romans 12:1. Also John tells us that *"the anointing which we have received from Him remains in us"* 1 John 2:20,27, Paul commands us to *"be filled with the Spirit"* Ephesians 5:18, and prayed for us to *"Be strengthened in the inner being by His Spirit"* Ephesians 3:16, for *"Serving God in the Spirit"* Romans 1:9, *"Praying in the Spirit"* Jude 20, 1 Corinthians 14:15. Jesus said: *"God is Spirit... and those who worship Him must worship the Father in Spirit and in truth"* John 16:26. *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, such is not of Him"* Romans 8:9.

8. God gives by grace everything you need to live **this life** and what we need for our Godliness, holiness, devotion and relationship with Him 2 Peter 1:3-4. His promises to accomplish this are *"precious and magnificent"*, and acting on them, God's grace helps us to do *"the works which He prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"*

Ephesians 2:10 and makes us "*partakers of divine nature*", that is, make us more like Him. Beloved, God's grace is something so great that it is unimaginable! Again read 2 Peter 1:3-15 and please meditate well on that statement of Peter! Also meditate on this statement of Paul! It is one thing to read the Word and another thing to meditate on His Word Psalm 1:2. My underlining and writing in **bold** letters, is to help you meditate.

Ephesians 3:14-21 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, **16** that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit **in the inner man**, **17** so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts** through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, **18** may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, **19** and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be **filled up to all the fullness of God**. **20** Now to Him who is able to do **far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think**, according to the power that **works within us**, **21** to Him *be* the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

See what the Spirit of Christ does in us according to this Scripture: He "*strengthens our inner being*" so that "*Christ may live in us*". He ensures that "*love becomes the root and the Foundation of our life*". He makes us "*understand with all the Holy people of God how wide and long and deep is His love*". He ensures that "*we become filled up to all that God is*", tells us that "*God's power works within us*", and that "*He can do much more than we could ever ask or imagine*". How different all this is to the Law of Moses that asked us to do the impossible! The Law requires the impossible, Grace provide all things.

The Law failed to justify us, because we could not do what it demanded. Therefore the only outcome was condemnation and we were cursed! Deuteronomy 28:15-68, and condemned to death 2 Corinthians 3:6. But under grace, God provides us everything we need for our material life and for our spiritual life and also provides us the willingness and the capacity for doing it 2 Peter 1:3-4. He causes good works to be born within us, and gives us the capacity to develop it naturally, producing satisfaction and joy when we achieve it.

9. Grace gives us the desire from within to be good. As it takes some time for children to learn to walk, we must also learn to walk in the Spirit and live in the Spirit by practicing it, obeying the intuitions, perceptions, discernment and guidance of the Spirit in our conscience and minds. God makes us **know** in our conscience what we have to do. We should simply **decide** if we will obey our conscience or not. If we intend decisively to obey we will discover that we will be

willing and able. We decide and grace makes it possible. Obedience will be making us more and more like Jesus every day, and as we see the results, we will experience sublime happiness.

Romans 8:1-6, 14 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

8 Therefore there is now **no condemnation** for those who **are in Christ Jesus**. **2** For the law of the **Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has set you **free from the law of sin and of death**. **3** For what the **Law could not do**, weak as it was through the flesh, **God did**: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, **4** so that **the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit**. **5** For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. **6** For the mind set on the flesh is death, but **the mind set on the Spirit** is life and peace... **14** for all who are being **led by the Spirit** of God, these are sons of God.

Romans 8:1-6, 14 New Living Translation (NLT)

8 So now there is **no condemnation** for those who belong to Christ Jesus. **2** And because you belong to him, the **power of the life-giving Spirit** has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. **3** The **Law of Moses was unable** to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So **God did what the law could not do**. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. **4** He did this so that **the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us**, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead **follow the Spirit**. **5** Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but **those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit**. **6** So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But **letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace**... **14** for all who are **led by the Spirit** of God are children of God.

The Law of Moses couldn't achieve its objective, because it did not have our collaboration because of our sinful nature's inability to obey. The Law asked good things, but could not count on us to do them, a sinful race unable to do them Romans 8:3. The grace of God solved that problem, giving us a new heart and an *"inner strength by his Spirit"* Ephesians 3:16. This is why all of us need to have Jesus in our lives. Jesus is the only hope for a good life here and eternity.

D. GOOD WORKS MAKES US THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

1. Matthew 5:16 Living Bible (TLB)

15-16 Don't hide your light! Let it shine for all; let your good deeds glow for all to see, so that they will praise your heavenly Father.

We **are** the living Word of God **walking** through our neighborhood, office, factory, and school, filled with the Spirit of Christ. We do not need to go through the streets of our neighborhood speaking in tongues to show that we are filled with the Holy Spirit, because they would think we are crazy 1 Corinthians 14:23. The evidence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance, will make our acquaintances want to

be like us. This is what impresses those around us, our character! The "*Tongues of angels*" are for our private devotion to talk with the invisible spiritual beings and pray in the Spirit Romans 8:26.

2 Corinthians 3:3-6 New Living Translation (NLT)

3 Clearly, **you are a letter from Christ showing** the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is **written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God**. It is carved **not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts**. **4** We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. **5** It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. **6** He has enabled us to be **ministers of his new covenant**. This is a covenant **not of written laws, but of the Spirit**. The old written covenant ends in death; but **under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life**.

We witness to our neighbors, co-workers and schoolmates **first with our life** and then with our words. It is pointless to quote verses from the Bible to our neighbors if they don't see them **alive in us**. Our deeds speak louder than our words to neighbors, classmates, fellow workers, friends and enemies. We have to speak first **without words** 1 Peter 3:1-2. We are "The Living Bible"; we are a walking Bible. People read the Bible in our lives and see it in our behavior. When later we give them a New Testament, they will say, "this book is true, we saw it in our neighbor."

2. Our good works will continue to speak for eternity,

Revelation 14:13 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their **deeds follow with them**."

This means that we are a living testimony with our behavior. Good works and helps that we do for our neighbor, colleagues from work, school, etc., will accompany us for eternity. How easy it is to testify to others when our life is a life of good works! If our neighbors owe us favors, they are more likely to listen to us and want to be like us and have what we have. This would cause them ask us why are you different? How can we be like you? Then we can answer them: "I was not like this always, I couldn't, but an encounter with God changed me! When God entered my life, cleaned my conscience Hebrews 9:14 and transformed me, I began to obey His voice inside of me and He made me a better husband, a better father, a better neighbor, a better worker, and a better boss, and continues to change me. I owe all to Him, and if you give room for Him in your life he will do the same or more in you!" Then you can give them a New Testament to read.

3. As we see, grace is not a license to sin, but the opposite: Grace is a **will**, a **power**, energy, and an **audacity** to believe that we can live a life that pleases God because **His grace** will help us. God has prepared for us a beautiful bouquet of good deeds to shine in our neighborhood, our school, our work and all places, simply "**walking in**" the good works He prepared for us beforehand Ephesians 2:10 and be a living testimony as well of His grace and power.

E. WE MUST PREACH AND TEACH WORKS OUT OF GRACE, NOT OF LAW.

1. We preachers must not exhort people to keep laws, the dry letter, nor to condemn those who do not keep them, because this exacerbates the problem 1 Corinthians 15:56; that is Old Covenant. We are ministers of the **New Covenant**:

2 Corinthians 3:6 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

6 who has made us competent to be **ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit**; for the letter kills, but **the Spirit gives life**.

We have to minister the Spirit of Grace that gives life. We must give them the solution to their incapacity: "*Christ in us*" Colossians 1:27. We must have compassion with those who cannot comply with the Law and teach them how to succeed under grace. Alcoholics Anonymous learned this. One of its principles is to confess: "*my life has become unmanageable and I need a higher power to help me to change*". The Church is not a court where people are judged and condemned with letter verses, but a hospital with good physicians under the Great Physician where sick people with sin are accepted and cured. Where the grace of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is poured out, so people become healed, nourished, motivated, enthused, filled with passion and get drunk with the Spirit Ephesians 5:18 with the faith that will make them able to trust in the grace of God, because "*the righteous man shall live **by faith***" Romans 1:17. Alcoholics Anonymous is very successful in getting alcoholics to believe they will overcome their inability to stop drinking a day at a time, **with God's help**.

Sinners do not only need to have their problems diagnosed and condemned, but be given the medicine and cure for them, which is God's forgiveness John 20:22-23 and a new life 2 Corinthians 5:17. After ministering forgiveness to them, we must encourage them to believe the Promise of the Father Ezekiel 36:26-27 for his transformation and holiness through the Holy Spirit John 3:7-8. We must emphasize and encourage them to believe in the transformation of their lives as they invite Christ into their consciences. He will clean them and their consciences will start to speak to them clearly as a born again believer and make it possible for them to serve the Lord

Hebrews 9:14. Under grace He will make us **doers** of the will of God, not **judges** of others James 4:11-12.

Galatians 5:16-18 Living Bible (TLB)

16 I advise you **to obey only the Holy Spirit's instructions**. He will tell you **where to go and what to do**, and then you won't always be doing the wrong things your evil nature wants you to. **17** For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures. **18 When you are guided by the Holy Spirit, you need no longer force yourself to obey Jewish laws.**

Galatians 5:16-18 The Message (MSG)

16-18 My counsel is this: Live freely, **animated and motivated by God's Spirit**. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. **Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?**

Galatians 5:16-18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

16 But I say, **walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.** **17** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. **18** But **if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.**

Under grace salvation **is not by** works, but **to do** good works; we don't have to be good to be saved, but be saved to be good. All our past, present and future sins and disobedience were dealt with by God since before the foundation of the World and revealed to us when we are born again and receive Christ Titus 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:9. Then we begin to enjoy life with a guilt-free conscience and the security that God gives. In addition to giving us a new life He assures us forgiveness when we fail and confess 1 John 1:8-9, in order that from a position of security we will perform better.

Hebrews 10:16-17 Living Bible (TLB)

16 "This is the agreement I will make with the people of Israel, though they broke their first agreement: I will write my laws **into their minds** so that they will **always know my will**, and I will put my laws **in their hearts** so that they will **want to obey** them." **17** And then he adds, "**I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.**"

2. After Jesus lives in us and we acknowledge Him in our conscience, we start a new life and we will no longer be the same person. God did not want only to forgive us, but help us to live a decent, good and holy life, full of joy, without guilt, generous and happy. Because God chose us to be the bride for His Son He wants us clean, holy and happy and will help us to achieve this so we will look every day more like His Son as light of the world, and become more like Him and one with Him:

Ephesians 5:25-27 Living Bible (TLB)

25 And you husbands, show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the Church when he died for her, **26** to make her **holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's Word**; **27** so that he could give her to himself as a glorious Church **without a single spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, being holy and without a single fault.**

Remember that all this is what God does in us when we recognize his continuing presence in our inner being. As we mature in our relationship with Him, we will want to please Him more and more, because we will love Him more and more. We should live this by faith, believing that we can, because *"The righteous man shall live by faith"* Romans 1:17.

3. This is what James tries to explain:

James 2:17-18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself. **18** But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.**"

How do we know that we are chosen to be the bride of the son of God, that we are born again, have received a new heart, and that we were filled with the Spirit of God? By our **desire** to improve our behavior and character every day! and our **desire** to be more like Jesus ¹ John 3:3.

1 John 3:9 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

9 No one who is born of God **practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 3:9 Living Bible (TLB)

9 The person who has been born into God's family **does not make a practice of sinning** because now God's life is in him; so he can't keep on sinning, for this new life has been born into him and controls him—he has been *born again*.

It is clear that these texts should be read together because they are written by the same John in his same Epistle and therefore they complement each other so we can understand their full meaning:

1 John 1:7-2:2 Living Bible (TLB)

7 But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son **cleanses us from every sin.** **8** If we say that we have no sin, **we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth.** **9** But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to **forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.** And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins. **10** If we claim we have not sinned, **we are lying and calling God a liar, for he says we have sinned.** **2:1** My little children, I am telling you this so that you will stay away from sin. **But if you sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. His name is Jesus Christ,** the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. **2** He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself and brought us into fellowship with God; and **he is the forgiveness for our sins,** and not only ours but all the world's.

The same John who says in his letter that all of us sin and also gives us the remedy for that sin, in the same Epistle he also tells us that whoever is born of God does not practice sin. Of course both are in the Scriptures, spoken by the same person in the same letter, so both are true. John does not contradict himself but expands his thought. I'll illustrate this truth, with two very different animals: the pig and the cat.

The pig is an animal that loves to be dirty. Where he lives is always dirty and stinky. Even if you bathe and perfume him, as soon as he sees a pond, he will splash about in it, because that is his nature and pleasure. The cat on the other hand, is a clean animal that you can have inside your home, allow him to walk through the living room, kitchen, dining room, rest in the armchairs and even allow it to get on your bed and sleep with you. Sometimes the cat falls into the mud and gets dirty, but his immediate reaction is to shake it off, lick and clean himself until he is spotless again because that is his nature. Both the pig and the cat can get dirty, but the reaction to the dirt is very different. The pig loves the dirt, the cat hates it!

Thus are we the believers in this world. God changed us and caused us to be born again and, just as the cat, we love to be clean. But as we live in this world that is like a coal yard, we can't avoid sometimes getting a little dirty. John tell us that if we say we do not sin we are lying to ourselves "If we say that we have no sin, **we are only fooling ourselves**" but he also gives us the stain remover, which is confession "But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to **forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong**" ^{1 John 1:9}. The difference between the pig and the cat is that although both can get dirty, one loves it and feels comfortable in it and continues to practice it, while the other, although he gets dirty at times, is uncomfortable because his nature demands that he be clean. Whenever he gets dirty he feels

uncomfortable and quickly cleanses himself. In our case, we get cleaned by confessing our sin.

Because of our mistaken anti-Catholicism, we have neglected confession. We must restore it in the Church. If you think that the Catholic confession is not done properly, then do it right, but do it. I think what John wants to say is that the born again believer, as the cat, doesn't mess up his life as a daily practice like the non-born again sinner. Like the pig, that's his nature and he practices it continually every day. But the cat, on the other hand, his continuous practice is to be clean even though he sometimes gets a spot. But this is something rather sporadic or accidental and not a continual behavior. On the contrary the sinner routinely sins as his normal pattern of conduct and maybe occasionally visits a church to get clean. But he who is born again **does not sin as a practice** and when he sins, he feels bad, but knows he has an advocate with the Father who will solve his problem when he confesses. This advocate is Jesus Christ the righteous.

I unite these two passages of John like this: *"No one who is born of God **wants to sin, and does not want to sin because he is born of God...** and if we sin, we have an **Advocate before the Father**, Jesus Christ, the righteous... and if we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all evil."*

John says: *"My little children, I am writing these things so that you may not sin." "And if any sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." John still calls the believer who sins "My little children" and to the "little children" who sin he assures them that they "have an Advocate before the father, Jesus Christ the righteous" and urges them to confess.*

4. Some Christians believe that if a believer sins then he loses his salvation. Others believe that if one is born again, he never loses his salvation because you cannot get un-born. The prodigal son never ceased to be son of his father. When he repented, he told his father: *"I am not worthy to be called your son."* The father did not even answer that, because the son was asking an impossibility. A son is always son; he can never be a slave. If a servant disobeys, you may put him out of the house, but if a son disobeys, you may discipline him with some punishment, but he will always be your son.

John 8:35 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever.

When the children of God sin, they do not lose their son-ship, although they can be disciplined, and if God disciplines him, that proves that he is a legitimate son, because nobody disciplines a neighbor's son Hebrews 12:6-11. When a true child of God disobeys Him and his conscience makes him feel guilty, it means that **he is a son of God because if the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin, evidently He has not abandoned him**. The confession is not to be saved again, because you are already saved. The confession is to be forgiven and avoid the discipline. That is why John is very clear:

1 John 1:7-2:2 Living Bible (TLB)

7 But if we are **living in the light** of God's presence, just as Christ does, then we have wonderful fellowship and joy with each other, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from **every** sin. **8** If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. **9** But if we **confess** our sins to him, he can be depended on to **forgive** us and to **cleanse** us from every wrong. And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins. **10** If we claim **we have not sinned, we are lying** and calling God a liar, *for he says we have sinned*. **2:1** My little children, I am telling you this so that you will **stay away from sin. But if you sin**, there is **someone to plead for you before the Father**. His name is Jesus Christ, the one who is all that is good and who pleases God completely. **2** He is the one who took God's wrath against our sins upon himself and brought us into fellowship with God; and he is the forgiveness for our sins, and not only ours but all the world's.

In an upcoming lesson: "Discipline and Holiness In The Church" we will see this issue of discipline in a more exhaustive way. This will be in Lesson 8.

CONCLUSION

1. Grace gives us a new conscience and leads us to do good works.
2. God prepared beforehand the good deeds that He wants us to do.
3. The Holy Spirit will guide us to the good works God prepared for us.
4. Good works demonstrates our character and makes us to be the light of the world.
5. We must preach and teach grace.
6. We must confess our sins if we do not want to be disciplined.
7. Our desire to be Holy is the sign that we are born again.