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“The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light”

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GRACE, GOVERNMENT, GLORY

These terms, so familiar to the Bible student, represent three of the several fundamental concepts which go to form the Christian revelation. They apply with special emphasis to the character and function of God in Redemption, specially to Christ as the Administrator of the Father's will. A brief study in their interrelation with one another, as a trilogy, is of practical interest therefore to the believer.

Some Definitions

1. Beginning with some attempt at definitions, the simplest will serve our purpose best: GRACE may be viewed as the revelation of the *heart* of God towards mankind in redemption from the curse of sin. And if we would have some conception of the depths of that heart it is revealed in a remarkable word of Paul's in his letter to Titus: "When the *kindness* of God our Saviour, and His *love* towards man, appeared, . . . according to His *mercy* he saved us" (read the whole passage in Tit. 3:4, 5 R.V.). Kindness, love, mercy—that is in short, the *grace of God*. There are other aspects, of course, but if we ponder the profound meaning of those three words, we shall understand how they express the very heart of God, moving out towards a lost world of sinning humanity for its redemption and recovery to His own favour, and we shall have gained some idea of what God means by GRACE. It is no mere abstract concept, but a motivating principle of action on the part of God leading to divine results in the individual experience of all who open their being to its inflow.

GOVERNMENT (as viewed in our present context) is the active administration of the *will of God*, according to the same divine principles which govern all God's ways of dealing with humanity, be it in grace or in judgment. Within the ambit of those principles there is not only mercy but also the *majesty* of God to be reckoned with. And here again, majesty is not a mere abstract concept, but enters into every activity of Deity; displayed as much in God's stooping to forgive the sinner in love, as when He vindicates it in judgment against sin. Illustrations abound in the Scriptures. The government of God is the expression of His justice and righteousness in a universe where sin has defied both.

What is GLORY? It is the perfect manifestation of the *divine excellence*, the outshining of God's essential holiness of character and being—both in grace and in government. Whenever in the Bible we are given a glimpse of His glory, it is invariably related to His essential holiness. Here again, there are examples innumerable, from which we may select (almost at random, as it were) Moses as he approached the "bush on fire yet never consumed": He was commanded to take his shoes from off his feet, and his immediate reaction to the voice that spake was, he "hid his face for he was afraid to look upon God." In every instance throughout the Bible where God's glory is manifested the effect is the same—*except* when it was veiled in mercy in the Incarnate Son when He trod this earth.

We thus are enabled to see both the essential interrelationship and interdependence of these three Biblical concepts. One or other, in some particular context or occasion, may appear alone, or at times one more prominent than the other two. In the Atonement, for example, viewed from one aspect the moral Government of God is seen in His judgment upon sin, from another aspect we see the surpassing grace of God making a way for the sinner to approach Him in worship: Both aspects reveal the glory of God in His holiness. Hence it is essential to maintain this balance of divine truth in reference to all three concepts.

A further point of cardinal importance still needs to be stated; viz., the *full revelation* of the divine Grace, Government and Glory comes to us only by way of the Incarnation, and all its attendant facts—the sinless Life, the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and the Exaltation of Jesus Christ at the right hand of God. His present session on high mediates to us today the present benefits and blessings of salvation, and is the guarantee of the future perfect consummation of all that Grace, Government, and Glory imply for the Christian in the coming day.

The Symbolism of the Throne

2. The next point to note is how each of these three concepts is connected with the symbolism of the THRONE. Broadly speaking, in Biblical usage the Throne signifies first, sovereignty, and then divine holiness and righteousness in executive action (Psa. 97:2; 89:14, R.V.); either in grace or judgment as the case may be.

(a) First there is the "*Throne of Grace*" (Heb. 4:14-16). The One who occupies it is our "Great High Priest", Jesus the Son of God. The great characteristic of this "throne" is its *accessibility* even though "exalted on high". Every believer-suppliant who feels the burden of human need may seek and obtain its succour. Hence the repeated exhortation, "Let us *draw near*" (ver. 16; also Heb. 7:25; 10:22). Its O.T. counterpart is the "mercy seat" of gold covering the Ark, which stood within the "Holy of holies" of the Tabernacle (Exo. 25:17-22). It was the place where God promised to meet and commune with His people through Aaron the high priest (v. 22); and thence issued His decrees and directions for the congregation. There is, however, this vast difference between the new and the old, that the divine Occupant of this 'throne' today is Himself "touched with the feeling of our infirmities", for He has suffered for us and is able to lavish upon us His mercy and grace and help "in every time of need". The one condition is—we must "draw near", implying a due recognition of His ability to meet us, and the personal relationship existing between His redeemed and Himself. Let us beware we do not ever seem to treat this 'throne' with indifference or aloofness, for whilst the One who occupies it is the "God of all grace," He administers governmentally against all sin even in the congregation of His saints. This point comes out more clearly later.

(b) Then we have the *Throne of Divine Government* (Rev. 4: 2, 3; cf. Psa. 93:2). Whilst the future aspect of this throne (e.g. Rev. 20:11-15; etc.) would seem to bulk more largely in the Scripture references, it is an "eternal throne", and as much in restraining operation *today* as in all past ages—the only abiding "Seat of Authority", whence issue the decrees of the divine will for all mankind. Nebuchadnezzar was not the first nor the last who had to learn that "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will". Present world chaos does not in any sense imply He has abdicated His throne. But it is in mercy He holds back judgment in order that men might turn to Him for guidance, wisdom and succour. The day is fast approaching when sin shall have reached its climax and then shall He come forth in all the majesty of divine power to execute judgment upon the earth.

(c) There is also the "*Throne of Glory*". Daniel saw the

"Ancient of Days" sitting upon His throne, which appeared as if surrounded by "fiery flames" (Dan. 7:9). Ezekiel also saw the same vision "as the appearance of a sapphire" (Ezek. 1:26). Likewise Isaiah (ch. 6:1-3) where the literal Hebrew of v. 3b is, "His glory is the fulness of the whole earth", implying that the glory of the ineffable God fills the universe to its utmost bounds—which is the only way we can express the idea of "limitlessness"—(cf. Isa. 40:5; Habak. 3:3; Ps. 72:19b; etc.).

It is not implicit that the Throne of Glory is a separate entity to the Throne of Government. Possibly it is nearer the truth to view them as being two aspects of the one throne; the one expressive more especially of the incomparable Majesty and eternal glory of the Person who occupies the throne, whilst the other displays the transcendent authority and limitlessness of His sovereign will in administering the realms He governs. Psa. 45:6 perhaps gives the two aspects in one, but in all probability Revelation, chapter 4 (and onwards), displays this most clearly and extensively. In reality, human language falls far short of the realities it struggles to compass. Nevertheless we are dealing with *realities*, eternal verities of *divine revelation*, and not with the flamboyant figments of mere human invention. And every human being, every angelic being, every spirit being, who goes to form the myriad hosts of the visible and invisible "worlds", is accountable to the One who occupies the Throne of Eternal Sovereignty—now, or hereafter; no one and nothing is exempted.

The Person Himself

3. But it is to the PERSON Himself we must now turn our attention, for HE IS GREATER than any throne He occupies: In fact, the throne is merely a symbolism, necessary to the revelation just because of the limitations of our human faculties to grasp the full meaning of the invisible and intangible. We shall lose the whole spiritual value of the symbolism if we fail to appreciate its practical lesson for ourselves, viz., that the exalted Christ who fills the throne of grace, government and glory, does so for the express purpose of dispensing to His saints the fulness of the unspeakable blessings He has for them in His enthronement—now, and in the future. He has in view the daily needs of life's vicissitudes. And we are to draw from His fulness, both "grace and glory" (Psa. 84:11) in every time of need—there is no sphere of life He cannot reach with instant aid and abundant supplies.

There are many presentations of this blessed Person scattered throughout the Scriptures.

(a) There is, for example, a very personal Portrait given in Songs of Solomon 5:9ff which, we suggest, is only applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Beloved", who *in grace* is everything to His own people whom He has redeemed and purchased unto Himself as a "peculiar possession" (Tit. 2:14; cf. Eph. 1:14; both R.V.). In that circle of holy fellowship and intimacy HE is "the chiefest among ten thousand; the altogether lovely One". It is through sheer GRACE we have been brought into such *intimacy*, and maintained within its encircling bonds. Even such a one as Saul of Tarsus, the erstwhile Pharisee, Christ-hater, and persecutor of the saints, succumbed eventually to His overwhelming grace, and confessed with overflowing heart, backed by a life of matchless devotion, "I count *all things but loss* for Christ . . . for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ my Lord" (read the whole para in Phil. 3:7-10). The Psalmist, as so often, excels in descriptive language to express the surpassing excellence of this same glorious Christ: "Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips. . . . Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty" (Ps. 45: 2, 3ff.). Untold millions since have been drawn to the same matchless Lover and Friend, and found life's supremest consummation in the fellowship of His love and service. "This is my BELOVED and this is my FRIEND, O, daughters of Jerusalem!" Have *you* not known that same indescribable reality of HIS love?

(b) The apostle John gives us a view of Christ in His governmental activity in Revelation 1:13-18. Comparing the general details with those in the previous picture, there are certain correspondences which may be summarily tabulated as follows:

S. of S.	Revelation
v. 11. <i>Head</i> as most fine gold; "locks" (<i>hair</i>) black as a raven	v. 14. <i>Head and hair</i> white as snow
v. 12. <i>Eyes</i> like "doves' eyes", etc.	v. 14. <i>Eyes</i> as a "flame of fire"
v. 15. <i>Legs</i> like "pillars of marble set in fine gold"	v. 15. <i>Feet</i> as "burnished brass re- fined in a furnace"
v. 15. <i>Countenance</i> as Lebanon	v. 16. <i>Countenance</i> as the sun
v. 16. <i>Speech</i> (mouth) is most sweet	v. 15. <i>Voice</i> as of many waters
	v. 16. Out of His <i>mouth</i> went a sharp two edged sword

It is obvious that in each instance the writer is describing an altogether dominating Person who fills his vision and his heart in overwhelming measure. He uses terms, in fact, indicative of absolute perfection; such perfection, we might say, as can only be predicated of Deity.

But the two portraits have marked differences: The first conveys the impression of supreme grace, beauty and gentleness, wedded to strength of character and commanding power of action. The other picture is obviously that of the exalted Head of the church, standing "in the midst of the seven lampstands"—the Administrator of divine government within it confines in a unique manner. He commands not only complete sway over all, but He manifests complete knowledge and understanding of the outward life and the inner motives of all who compose the church. This is evidenced by His repeated "I KNOW", for, "His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings" (Job 34:21). It is this thought which leads the apostle to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and His ways past tracing out!" (Read the whole passage in Rom. 11:33-36). Hence the throne of divine government derives all its significance and authority from the One who alone has the right to occupy it, for "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:7-11). "His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall never pass away" (Dan. 7:14).

(c) The *Glory* of the Person: It is scarcely possible to treat of this aspect apart from the other two, for Christ's glory is inherent in the very exercise of His grace and His government. Yet there are certain features which are distinctive.

There is first the glory of *the Lord's pre-incarnation*, before He trod this earth as a man among men. Proverbs 8:22-31 is indubitably (so we believe) a reference to this aspect, though veiled in a highly poetical idealistic phraseology. Read in the fuller light of the N.T. revelation it reveals the glory of the divine intimacy between the Persons within the Godhead, more particularly between the Father and the Son, the "Only-begotten" (a term peculiar to

the writings of John). Christ's own word in John 17:5, "the glory which I had with thee (the Father) before the world began" gives ground for such an understanding (see ch. 1:1-5).

There is also the peculiar glory attached to the *Incarnation*. "The Word was made flesh . . . and *we beheld His glory*" (John 1:14) was the consistent testimony of His disciples, which filled them with the assurance and boldness of their witness after He had ascended. The apostle John selects seven notable miracles amongst others which he terms "signs", the first being the turning of the water into wine in Cana, by which He "*manifested His glory*" (John 2:11 R.V.). Each miracle was a display of that glory, though veiled under varying guises except to those who had eyes to see beneath the covering. He had to say to Martha "said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

Moreover in His *ascension* the glory did not cease, for He has continued to shed that glory abroad in the hearts of men opened to its inflow. So that Paul declares, "we all, with unveiled face beholding (as in a mirror) the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17, 18. Std. R.V.).

Present application

4. We have already indicated in some measure that these three concepts are in evidence *today*, and therefore have a very practical present application to daily life, both inside and outside the body of the church. This forms too a large subject to deal with exhaustively, but it can be briefly illustrated.

(a) It might be possible but not easy to find so conspicuous an illustration of the activity of the *grace* of God as seen in Paul the apostle. Peter's restoration to faith and fellowship in the Christ he denied is not far behind, but there is something altogether distinctive in the way God dealt with Saul of Tarsus to place him in the very forefront. The history is contained in the Acts, but his own description of the first phase of his life is painted by himself in 1 Tim. 1:12-16 in three words: "a blasphemer, a persecutor, an injurious person"; which is summed up in v. 15, "I am the foremost of sinners". That is the "old man", under condemnation. But "the *grace of our Lord* abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus"—that is the divine

resultant of divine grace in action! Multiply that one illustration by untold millions enacted in every century since Paul's day, and we are still far short of exhausting the story of God's grace!

(b) The illustration of the Lord's *governmental* dealings is not so easy to depict even when found, for the predominant feature of God's dealings today is in grace. But a careful study of the solemn incident of Annanias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11 may be termed, with due reserve, an exemplary instance of divine government not to be lightly overlooked. A further instance may be seen in 1 Corinthians 5. There is both a human side and a divine side to this: The human side is verse 13, "put away the wicked man from among yourselves," which is but the ratification of the judgment already passed by the Head of the Church, the Lord Himself. There is the divine *action* in even more solemn form seen in chap. 11:29 and 30, and still in connection with the church as a body: "Many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep." It is relevant to the subject to study 2 Pet. 20:21. When we look around today (in due humility of spirit) and see the "deadness", and "barrenness" of many churches and even in believers who once were shining lights for God, does this not imply that God's blessings have been removed because of persistent coldness and backsliding of heart? Is this not verily the solemn judgment of God?

(c) As to the subject of *glory*, we can now only deal with its *present* manifestation, though the future is even fuller. We have already commented above on 2 Corinthians 3:18, where the believer is said to reflect even now the *glory of the Lord Christ*, and thereby is "being transformed from glory to glory". Is that not the development of the indwelling divine life, light, and love, through the Holy Spirit in practical holiness? We believe it is. And in the same epistle, chap. 4:6, the apostle states the resultant of the divine indwelling, viz., "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Here is life's greatest vocation. The believer is to be a "focal point of divine glory", as it were, radiating "the light of life" in the moral darkness which covers humanity today. But the Devil is busy blinding men's eyes to that glory, "lest the Gospel of the glory of Christ" should dawn upon them (2 Cor. 4:4). Nothing, however, can finally thwart God's purpose in making known "the riches of His glory" upon vessels of mercy, which afore He prepared *unto glory*"

(Rom. 9:23). And every believer who in one way or another yields himself to the indwelling Spirit of God to be a channel of blessing to a soul, helps to spread that glory, and fulfils God's purposes of glory (John 15:9). If only we have eyes to see through and into the present darkness, we shall see the glory of God shining in many a life, to the praise of His glory, and the glory of His grace (Ephes. 1:4, 5).—A. McD. R.

GENUINE

A Word Study

BY W. WILCOX

Paul's conception of the Christian Life was ever of something that was genuine, true, open, sincere. He could not conceive of anything in it of a spurious or hypocritical nature, for such would be essentially contrary to the nature of his Lord, who always lived with "open face" before His Father. Every believer should be as "genuine" as was his Lord, and all activities in which he engages should exhibit truth and should pursue righteous ends.

To convey this idea Paul uses the adjective *gnēsiōs* four times, and the adverb *gnēsiōs* once. The former is thrice translated by "true", Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4, and (with the article) by "sincerity", 2 Cor. 8:8, and the latter by "truly" in Phil. 2:20. The word means "legitimately born", "not spurious," hence genuine, true, sincere. Paul uses it in four different connections.

1. *Genuine Love.* (2 Cor. 8:8).

Paul had been assured of the faith, utterance, knowledge and earnestness of the Corinthian saints, but while he longed to be similarly assured of their love, he was somewhat uneasy in his mind as to its true nature. Having exhorted them to "see that they abound in love more and more," he proceeds to tell them that through the earnestness of others he seeks to prove whether their love is genuine or not. Love which is not genuine has been born out of a wrong source and is used for wrong ends. It is spurious, and wrongs both lover and loved.

To enforce his point he turns to the great example of Christ