

A tall, white lighthouse with a red lantern room at the top and a black observation deck. It stands on a small, green, oval-shaped island that appears to be floating in a sky filled with dark, dramatic clouds. The lighthouse has a black base and a black observation deck. The sky is a mix of dark grey and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The lighthouse is positioned on the right side of the image, with the text on the left.

**THE
MERCY
AND
GRACE
OF
GOD**

BEN HOWARD

THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD

*Thought for the book taken from the
Message delivered on November 6, 1983
Glen Fork, West Virginia U.S.A.*

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THE MERCY AND GRACE OF GOD

The Lord dealt with my heart on a subject in 1978 when I was in West Virginia helping to build Brother Sam Francis' church. I was over in a motel room meditating on the Lord trying to think of something to preach that night because Brother Francis had asked me to minister. As I was meditating it seemed like I could hear a voice somewhere off in the distance begin to talk about how the church had great grace upon it, but they fell down to a level that God couldn't put great grace upon them. He just had to have mercy on them, and His grace provided that mercy for them so they survived on mercy for seven church ages. But the same voice, I could hear it off somewhere said, "Notice in Acts, Chapter 4, the church had great grace upon them." I went over to Brother Francis' church that night and that is what I ministered on, *The Mercy and Grace of God*.

There is a difference between mercy (saving grace) and great grace. We certainly need mercy as long as we are not pleasing God, but when we are pleasing God then He puts great grace upon us. When we are well-pleasing in the eyes of the Lord, He smiles upon us; His countenance shines forth upon us. But when we are not pleasing God, His grace provides mercy for us. That is why we hear about the mercy seat. There has to be that blood between us and Him. He can't see our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ when we are trying to do what is right. But many times in our walk with God we are not measuring up to the standard that God has ordained where we can stand spotless before the Lord. So therefore, He has to have mercy upon us. He has winked at our ignorance through seven church ages. They believed in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost baptism, that

is what the church believed; but they were in the *permissive will of God*. He blessed them because He foresaw what He was bringing them to. Not that He was pleased with that trinity baptism, but He knew that He was going to bring them to something, and that was to the full revelation of the Word. I believe with all my heart that God is restoring the church back to the place where He can put His great grace upon us. Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your love and your goodness and your mercy upon us and for your grace. Lord, as we approach the end time, and as we see the day that we're living in, we feel by the happenings in the world that surely we are drawing near to the time of your coming. When we look in the Word of God we see what a church should be when you do come, Lord. According to Ephesians, Chapter 5, we are to be washed by the water of the Word. We are to be spotless, Lord. There are to be no wrinkles, no spots, nor any such thing. We are to be clean, and we are to be holy. So, I pray, Heavenly Father, for this little while, that you will put your anointing upon us; and put your anointing upon the congregation. Put words in our mouth Lord that we can speak that which will help your people. Lord, bless them and enlighten them to the time we are living in and we'll be careful to praise you for it. In Jesus Christ name. Amen.

Ephesians 2:1-2, *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"* That's the kind of spirit we had. Don't try to deny it, we all did. But thank God that we have a different spirit now. We have a different outlook. We're serving a different master, and we're eating from a different tree. You can't eat from the table of the Lord and the table of Satan at the same time. You can't serve mammon and God at the same time. You have to make a decision. As Joshua

said, "Choose you, this day, whom you will serve." He said, "...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Isn't that beautiful?

Verse, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Can you say, "Amen," to that scripture? That's what we were. We loved to talk about the lust of the flesh; the things of the world, and the things of the flesh because that was the spirit that was in us. But there was another spirit that came into us when Jesus Christ came into us. He thinks different, so that causes us to think different.

Verse 4, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us," (I want you to notice—"God, rich in mercy.") How many knows that the Word teaches that while we were yet in sin, Christ died for us? We couldn't help ourselves. We couldn't save ourselves. We were lost. We were without God. In one place it says, "We were lost, having no hope." We were lost in this world without God, but God was rich in mercy and He sent the Gospel our way, and gave us ears to hear. We heard the gospel call, and we came to Christ. So that makes a difference, "God, rich in mercy."

Verse 5, "Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" That means, when God looked down His mercy compelled Him to have favor (grace) upon you because He foresaw you. He knew what you would do. He knew you were one of His. He knew you were His offspring that just came into the world the wrong way and got all messed up, but He's calling you back to where you were in the beginning. Where were you in the beginning? You were in His thoughts, in His mind. He foresaw you. He knew you even before He made the world. Praise God! So He put His grace on you.

Verses 6-7, *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."* God loved us, and His intention was to save us even before Jesus Christ was manifested in human flesh. It was through Jesus Christ that He made a way. Through Jesus Christ, God came and spoke to this world, didn't He? How many heard the message, *Recognizing the Father in the Son* (tape #56)? And how that God incarnated Himself in Christ when John baptized Him? Then when Christ loved you, that was the love of God. He loved you so much that He died for you. Paul said in Acts, Chapter 20 that God shed his blood for you. Verse 8, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:"* I want you to carefully notice how you are saved, and how you are brought into the kingdom of God. Further on, we'll get what God requires of us after we come to the knowledge of Him. Right now He is trying to show what we were when we were sinners and what He did for us. We have to know what He did for us while we were in sin before we can appreciate Him. We were lost; there was no way. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden it separated man from God. There was a great chasm, and no one could cross it. Man was on one side, and God was on the other. Man was lost but here came Jesus, Glory to God, to make a way! You were already His anyway. He just had to make a way. He made a bridge so that you could cross from the place you were; where you were lost and in darkness without hope and without God, but He made a bridge where you could cross over and come right into God through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Verse 9, *"Not of works, lest any man should boast;.."* Now here's where we teach something that gets a little controversial. Some say, "It's not of works; it is grace. I can't help it. God saved me,

and it's not any work that I can do. I'm not going to try to do any works because that's not it." But I'll tell you, He is speaking here specifically about a man that is in sin, that doesn't know God. You *cannot* buy salvation. "No price in my hand I bring, only to His Cross I cling. For my cleansing this I see, nothing but the blood of Jesus." That's the sinner right there. Nothing *you* can do. So it's not by any works that you can do. The Catholics try to work their salvation out. They try to do penance; they try to earn something from God. But all of your works, the Word of God says in that sense is as filthy rags. It's the righteousness of God, and by grace you are saved. It is not of works lest any man should boast. In other words, we come to God a sinner, and all of our works couldn't help us. Then that brings us to the thought, "If it is not by works, then I should sit back with my arms crossed and just let the world go by, and not try to do anything." That is a perverted view of serving God in this end time. I am speaking specifically of a sinner coming to God that doesn't know God, no way to get to God, and no works that he could ever do to get to God. Then God reaches and puts him or her into His kingdom. The book of Titus tells us, "See that you be careful to maintain good works." It's very important to maintain good works. But you, as a sinner, can't do any good works to earn yourself anything. It takes the blood of Jesus Christ to save you. I'm talking about mercy and grace.

So here we see that God has mercy. He is rich in mercy. So He reaches down and He saves you. He sets you into His family. Then when you come into the family of God you begin to have responsibilities. The Bible teaches in John, Chapter 15, "Jesus is the vine, and we are the branches," we are the same thing He is. And it says, "Every branch that doesn't bring forth fruit, He cuts it off and it is cast into the fire," so there are some good works to be done. There is some earned grace to be put upon the church

in this last day. Now this grace that God is talking about here, "by grace you are saved," that is not earned grace. It is saving grace that God gave you because He had mercy upon you; He loved you and put grace upon you. But when you please God and you do what God says and you keep God's Word and you keep God's commandments, then you please God. You're doing what He says. He smiles upon you, and puts grace upon you. Praise God! Now you're not just living on mercy all the time. That's what the church did through the church ages, and by the help of the Lord we are going to prove it to you.

The church came through a time when they survived under a survival message. The great blessings of God were not among them. In some very isolated cases there were certain men that really got in contact with God. The church as a whole had to exist where wheat and tares grew together, but we find in history a church that wasn't living on God's mercy. They were living with great grace upon them. There was in history, a church that way. This church existed before the church ages began.

John, on the Isle of Patmos, got the messages for the seven churches. The very first one was the Ephesus Church which began about 53 A.D. He began to tell them the good things about them; but he said, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because you've left your first love. (Paraphrasing) "You don't have what you had to start with." And any time we backslide somewhat, the favor of God is not upon us. The face of God is not smiling upon us, but we are just living on His mercy. We don't want to try the mercy of God in this hour because the Holy Spirit is lifting and going right back to Israel, right back to Jerusalem where it started from. This gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, 2,000 years ago left the nation of Israel and it came over on the Gentiles because they were a people that

would hear the Word. The Jews rejected it. They said, "Away with this man named Jesus," and they said the same thing about the apostles that carried the gospel. In Chapter 13 of the Book of Acts, Paul and Barnabas went and preached the Word of God and the Bible says that the Jews were hardened against it. They were hardened and they blasphemed. But the Gentiles heard Him gladly, and as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed.

That's why you believe the Word of God in this hour. That's why these flowery things and shiny things don't attract you. You want to see the glory of God, the glow of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The denominations have bright shining lights, neon signs, and everything; they want to advertise like the world. But the only thing John did was to go out there preaching at the river of Jordan. The Bible says, "The people came and heard the Word." There was a drawing power about it because God had ordained it. God has ordained something in this hour, and there's going to be somebody to hear it. Who is it going to be? It's going to be those that can respond to it. If the Word is in you, then you can respond to the Word, and He is the Word. If He's not there, then you can't respond to the Word. You'll respond to some creed, or some dogma, like Cain. There wasn't anything in Cain to respond to the Word. He couldn't get a revelation. When Jesus Christ came and preached the Word; He said about the Pharisees, "You cannot hear My Word because there is no place in you for the Word." There are a lot of people today who have no place in them for the Word, but there are people on the other hand where nothing will satisfy them but the Word. They're not going to look at crowds; they're not going to look at flowery things, but they're going to look to Jesus Christ.

Notice now, it's not by works that you're saved. That has nothing to do with a person that God has already saved. This

will bring us from "*in sin*" into the kingdom of God. Don't get off track here. We want to stay right in the middle of the road of the Word of God. We don't want to get off on some little side trail and make a doctrine. We want to take the Word of God just like it was laid down; like Paul preached it. There's too many that want to lead off on little side trails. There's some that want to say, "It's not by works, not any good thing I've done," and that is true; it's not any good thing you've done that you are saved. But if you've been serving God for a while and you've got the blessings of God upon your life, it is some good things that you are doing that causes God to bless you, to meet your needs, to lift you up and set you in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. How many see the difference in that? There is where a lot of people get off track. They get off in a mud hole, but the Bride is not going to do that. She's going to take the Word. We know by reading the Word of God, Paul laid certain things down that are Godly works, saying, "See that you maintain good works." And it says in the Book of Hebrews, "God is not unmindful of your labor towards His name sake." There's good works for the believer. The believer has good works because the believer has the works of Jesus Christ. "These works that I do, and greater works shall ye do." But you, being a sinner, there's nothing that you can do to work your way to God. You just have to fall on the mercy of God and let him save you.

Verse 10, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,..*" Notice that. That would sound like a contradiction if you weren't wise. It says, "Not by works." And then it says, "Created in Christ Jesus *unto* good works." What does it mean? A sinner cannot have good works to save himself, but once the sinner is saved by the blood of the lamb he has to have good works. If he is saved he will love Jesus and he will want to do the works. Jesus said, "Unless you deny yourself daily, and take

up your cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple." That is still so today. A lot of people want to follow the *name of the Lord*, but not the *Spirit of the Lord*. Once I said, "A lot of people want Jesus to be their Savior, but not too many want Him to be their Lord." There is a difference. The tribulation saints say that Jesus is their Savior because they give their life there and so forth by their testimony. (Revelation, Chapter 7) They testify of the blood of Jesus Christ and what it has done for them, but He is not their Lord, because if they were obeying Him, walking in the light of the Word, they would go in the rapture. I want Him to be my Lord, don't you? I'm not just trying to fall on His mercy and say, "Lord, save me." And then lie around, slop around, and live on His mercy. There's a tribulation for those folks that do that, but He's going to put great grace upon his Bride. A man that loves a girl and wants to marry her, he's not going to put her through everything to punish her, or anything to that effect. God is getting all the impurities out of the Church. She is not just going to live on God's mercy.

I would like to read in Acts, Chapter 4, to show you that in the early church they were saved by grace, it wasn't by works. God had mercy upon them and saved them. They couldn't save themselves, but then they pleased God so much, and did the works of God so much, that He put great grace upon them. There are two things about that word "grace" in relationship to God. First, God's grace compelled Him to have mercy upon you to save you. Now that's the saving grace of God, but then there's another, even one translation says, "They found great favor in his sight." When you find favor--that's not mercy upon you. I've often said it like this, "When you go on a job, to work, if you do that job just like you're supposed to, and you do everything right, the boss can't do anything but pat you on the back and say, "I'm proud of you, you're doing it just right!" That's what the

Lord Jesus is going to do to the Bride. There is going to be a Church. He's going to pat the Church on the back, His little Bride, and say, "I'm proud of you. You're doing everything just right, just like My Word says, just like I want it done." Then He's going to smile upon Her, and give Her gifts, and give Her the good things that He has ordained. That's great grace, but on the other hand, then if we went on the job, and we just did real sloppy, and sit down every time we got a chance, and didn't care one way or the other much. If we didn't get fired, the boss would be having mercy on us. We would be existing on the mercy of the company that we were working for.

That's what a lot of people are trying to do in this hour that we are living in. They're trying to exist on God's mercy. I don't want to just exist on God's mercy; I want to live the life. I want to please Him! I want to be where He can pat me on the back and say, "I'm proud of you son, you're doing it just right!" That's what happened with Jesus. He was announced as being the Son of God when John baptized Him, in Matthew 3, and a voice came out of Heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased (whom I'm pleased to dwell in)." And God came into Him, and then Jesus went through a lot of trials and so forth. The Bible says that He learned obedience by the things that He suffered, and so on, but we find that when He went up on the mountain, in Matthew 17, He went through certain things and proved Himself faithful in the things of God. God knew He would anyway. He was an example, and God wanted to set forth an example. So Peter and John went up on the mountain with Jesus, and there appeared Moses and Elijah talking with Him, then a cloud came down. The Apostle Peter did like a lot of people today, when they see a little supernatural they want to build another church (organization). He said "If it be good for us to be here let us make a tabernacle for thee, and one for Moses,

and one for Elijah." That's what a lot of people want to do, make a denomination or an organization of this man, or that man, or this preacher, and that preacher. We are following Jesus! They all got excited when they saw the supernatural, but do you know what the Word says? "A cloud overshadowed them." And, "a voice came out of the cloud." The voice said (again), "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," but this time He said more. He said more than He did at the River of Jordan. How many know what He said here that He didn't say at the River of Jordan? He said,

"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, HEAR YE HIM." In other words, He was speaking for God. I'm telling you - If there's a five-fold ministry, and the Word says there is in Ephesians, Chapter 4, that's going to cause the church to reach the fullness of the man Christ Jesus, they're not going to be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Then, that's the church. That's the preachers. Those are the people that God's going to say, "This is my beloved bride." Now there on the mountain, Jesus wasn't pulling on the mercy of God. God was pleased with Him. According to the Word of God, there's going to be a church that is pleasing to God. There's going to be a church not tossed to and fro and scattered about with every wind of doctrine, but there's going to be a church that loves the Lord with all of her heart, and she's going to have good works.

Before I leave that part on the works, I want to go over this one more time to be sure you get it. How many see that we are not saved by any works that we've done? It's strictly by the grace of God that He saved us. We couldn't work our way to salvation. You could work your fingernails off, and you still wouldn't earn a thing as far as your salvation and paying the price for your sins, because Jesus did that at Calvary. Notice then, when it

comes to living the life, doing the works of the Lord, letting the good works follow us, and so forth, then that is a necessity and a commandment. It says the same thing in Titus. It seems like the Holy Spirit keeps bringing my mind to that. I want you to see that we are not saved by works, but there's got to be good works. Titus 3:8, "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly,..." Now Paul was instructing Timothy how to preach. Someone might say, "Well, I thought the Holy Ghost was supposed to do that." Well, He is, but the Holy Ghost is using Paul's mouth to do it. The Holy Ghost is using Paul's mouth, and using the letter that Paul wrote to tell Timothy.

Continue Verse 8, "these things affirm constantly," In other words, to say the same thing is not grievous. That's what Paul said, wasn't it? "To me to write the same thing is not grievous, but for you it is needful." I started preaching Christ, and I haven't got through preaching on that one sermon yet!" So don't worry so much about finding a title for a sermon. Open your mouth and He will fill it! I believe that with all my heart. I believe if you'll open your mouth, when you've got the Holy Ghost and you've studied to show yourself approved, He will fill it. Titus 3:8, again—"This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." Now, I want you to watch—"they which have believed in God." (not sinners out here trying to work their way to God) You don't preach to sinners, "Come and do some good works; do this and do that and you'll be saved." You preach to sinners, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Fall on the mercy of God. You might have been on drugs and a whole lot of things, but my, my, my, one dip in the blood of Jesus Christ makes you whiter

than snow. It'll take away all sin." But once He takes away your sins and puts you in the kingdom, then see that thou be careful to maintain good works. That's the way to get the favor of God. You're not living on God's mercy then. I just felt the Holy Spirit pressing me to read that so that we can get the distinction between works, because if Jesus Christ is in there, there will be good works. If you do not have the works of Christ, and are not expressing the works of Christ, then I would have to assume that He is not there (in you). We can't play with God in this hour. If you're going to play with God, I promise you one thing, there's a great tribulation out here; we're edging right up to the beginning of it now. But there's going to be a church that's going to be the perfect expression of Jesus Christ and the great grace of God is going to be on this church just like it was upon Jesus Christ.

Living on mercy or living on grace? First I want to show you in history a church that did please God; they were not living on the mercy of God. In Acts, Chapter 4, I want to begin reading in Verse 32. This is after Pentecost when great things had already taken place. Acts 4:32, *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul:..."* They had something, one heart and one soul and they all loved Jesus. They all wanted to please Jesus. They didn't care how good their standing was in society. Too many people today are too concerned about what their neighbor is going to think about them. God didn't call us to fit in. He called us to be separated. You want to fit in with Jesus Christ. I'll live for Jesus and let the world go by. I'll live for Jesus, He will supply. Continue Verse 32, *"...Neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."* This next verse is what I want you to get.

Verse 33, *"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: (Now notice) and great grace was upon*

them all." Notice that, "AND GREAT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL." Why? If you had read the chapters from two on through there, you'd see the great works that they did for God, see how they prayed, see how they sought God, and see how they lived for God. They pleased God in every way. So there wasn't anything that God could do but say to that church, "I'm proud of you." God was so proud of that early church that they brought the sick and laid them in the street, and Peter couldn't get around to praying for them all. So they just laid them in the street, and when Peter walked by and his shadow touched them they got up and they were healed. The Bible says, "They were healed, every one of them." Why? Because great grace was upon the church; they weren't living on mercy. They were living on great grace. In other words, they were not afraid that God was going to strike them down. No, Sir. They stood for the Word! They knew they were with the Word, and if you know you're with the Word, you don't have to be afraid. You can lift your hands and say, "I love you, Jesus. I appreciate you, Jesus. Come into my life, Jesus. Lead me, Jesus. Jesus, you know I want to do just as you want me to do." But if you know you've been playing around, dabbling around in sin, a little bit here and a little bit there, you better be afraid because you're living on God's mercy. If it wasn't for His mercy and the mercy seat, and I speak of the mercy seat only in a realm of types, not that He's up there offering blood or anything. He did that at Calvary. He made a provision, didn't He? There was great grace and Jesus was among them.

But Jesus finally had to withdraw Himself and take His position in heaven and minister to the church through the church ages until he got ready to come back again in this last day. The church lived on mercy for almost 2,000 years; for seven church ages. He brought the church through by a survival

message, until He got ready to come back and be in the five fold ministry to bring the Word like He's doing now! God is real! The Word is right! Ananias and Sapphires tried to lie just a little bit, tell a little white lie. Do you know what happened to them? The church wasn't living on mercy. They were living on great grace, and God wasn't going to let it get defiled. When they came in and tried to tell a lie about their financial situation and what they were doing for God, and wanted to make it appear to the rest of the church that they were really doing something for God, Peter was preaching and he said, "Did you sell the land for so much?" And Ananias said, "Yes." And Peter said, "*Why has Satan filled thy heart to lie against the Holy Ghost?* You've not lied to man, but you've lied to God." It was God speaking, and it's going to be God speaking again right through a ministry. The church is going to recognize it as being God! They're not going to recognize it just as a mortal man.

There was a man named Paul. He stood up and he instructed the church, and it still stands as the foundational Word of God in this hour, and who would dare to say that it is wrong? That early church was living on the great grace of God. If you read the book of Joshua it types out so perfectly with the church; how the angel of the Lord came down and was with Joshua. In the Chapter 3 of Joshua, God said, *"I will live among you, and I will dwell among you."* That's where God wanted to be, among the children of Israel. There was one stinking rat in the bunch named

Achan who had stolen the golden wedge and he loved those Babylonian garments just like a lot of people do. They want to add a little of the Baptist. Add a little Methodist. Add a little of what the Pentecostals do. I don't care what the Baptist do. I don't care what the Pentecostals do. I don't want any Babylonian garments; neither do I want their gold. I want that gold that's tried in the fire! Jesus said, "I'll give you gold." Revelation, Chapter 3 says, "And this gold that I give you, you may think that you're poor, but you're rich." (Paraphrased) Glory to God, rich in the blessings of God, and if you're rich in the revelation of the Word then you're rich. Your Father owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and all the *potatoes* under the hills, too, doesn't He? He owns all the gold and everything else.

Now that guy named Achan got in there; he stole the golden wedge. God said, "I'm going to dwell among you." God couldn't dwell among a people where there was sin in the camp. He can't today either, but do you know what? The Lord revealed where the sin was. Joshua told Achan to give God praise, and Achan couldn't do it because condemnation was in his heart. Joshua found out by the revelation of the Holy Ghost; by the wisdom of God where the sin was. He got rid of the sin in the camp and God dwelled among them. But pretty soon as the years went by

the people in general, the congregation as a whole, they were satisfied to let sin stay among them. They weren't so zealous for God. They lost their good works. The church had to be clean, no matter how many there was, whether it was five or five hundred. It had to be clean. They began to let things go on. They weren't concerned. They lost God and didn't know that they had lost Him. Pretty soon they had Ahab on the throne. Pretty soon they had a Jezebel leading them around by the nose. Pretty soon they had temples built of different idols, and Israel existed on the mercy of God and they paid every day, and they are still paying. Go back to the Book of Acts and see, that's the same thing that happened. God wouldn't let sin stay in the early church. Ananias and Sapphires fell dead. God took the sin out of the church, because great grace was upon it. They weren't living on mercy; they were living under the great grace of God. Peter was a long winded preacher. Ananias fell dead and they took him out and buried him, and his wife three hours later she came in. Peter stopped his sermon just long enough to say, "Come on up, Sapphires. Ananias was telling me that you sold your land for so much. Is that right?" She said, "Oh yes, and we really want to support the work of the Lord. We want to lay it at your feet because we want to see this thing go over." Then Peter said, "You're lying, Sapphires. You're not lying to man. You're lying to the Holy Ghost. Do you see those fellows back at the door? They just finished burying your husband, and they're going to take you out and bury you just like they did him because you're lying to the Holy Ghost." She fell over and gave up the ghost. That's when Jesus was living in the church. See, it was Jesus in the church.

When Joshua crossed Jordan to start with, God was with Israel. He wouldn't let sin get by. Israel had to live on God's

mercy, and they're still living on God's mercy. But notice, Israel got willing to accept things that weren't right. The early church did the same thing. They wanted to mix it and make it look good and make it look attractive, rather than staying with what Paul taught. There were some of them among the Galatians and in Jerusalem that wanted to mix half law and half grace and be accepted by both sides. They said, "Oh, we believe in Jesus, but I'll tell you we've got to keep the law because Moses said this and Moses said that. Yes of course we believe the man Jesus. We know about Mary. She was a young virgin. That guy that was born to Mary, Jesus, yes, we've heard of him. We believe in him, yes." (Paraphrasing) That's what the Catholic Church does today, doesn't it? They want to talk about the virgin named Mary. They say, "Yes, we know Jesus. That's the one born to the virgin Mary-- Virgin Mary this, and Virgin Mary that." There's not anything wrong with Mary, but the emphasis was not put on Mary in the Bible. It was the Word she carried, and she carried Jesus. She was only an incubator, and after Jesus was born she had to come just like any other woman. She had to go to Pentecost and get the Holy Ghost just like everybody else. A lot of people today, instead of talking about Jesus, they want to talk about Brother William Branham all the time saying, "Brother Branham said, Brother Branham said, and Brother Branham said." They say to me, "You don't talk enough about Brother Branham." That's the way the Catholic's are. They say, "You don't talk enough about the Virgin Mary." Well, the Virgin Mary had her place. Brother Branham had his place. But Jesus is the one that I love. Jesus died for me. It's Jesus in my heart, not Brother Branham. I thank God that he (William Branham) came and told me to get back to the Word! He pointed me to Jesus. Praise God!

Anyway, this church had great grace upon it and not mercy. They weren't living on mercy alone. How many see the difference in mercy and grace? Now I want to go to Galatians, Chapter 5. I want to show you that it's possible to fall from grace. When you fall from grace you fall down to the level of living on mercy, and when you're living on mercy it throws you right into Hebrews, Chapter 12. Do you know what Hebrews, Chapter 12 says? Those that He loves He rebukes and chastens. Those that get out of line, He chastens them. But God doesn't chasten us as long as we're pleasing Him; He pours on the Holy Spirit. But not when we fall down on His mercy. Now it took mercy to save us, and from time to time we all need the mercy of God, don't we? But I'll tell you, the grace was in two parts. The first part is the grace of God that caused God to have mercy on you, and He reached down and saved you when you couldn't help it. But the great grace is what God puts upon you after you're saved when you please Him. So the Galatians here, they were living under the grace of God just like the church was that we read about that had great grace, but then they fell because they got to looking at something else. What did they fall from grace down to? It was down to the level of mercy. They didn't lose their salvation. Let me tell you this, "If you're ever born of God, there is nothing you can do to be lost. If you're saved you're not going to be lost, but you can fall down to live on the level of where you're just living on His mercy." I don't want to live and exist on His mercy; I want His grace on me. That's what the early church had, and this last day church is going to have great grace upon them.

Now I want to read in Galatians 5:1-3, "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye*

be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again unto every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law."

That is, if he was circumcised trying to earn salvation through it and trying to keep the law, then he was leaning on that for his salvation and trying to take the law and mix it with grace to bring about his salvation. Brother, Jesus made a new covenant, and He'll write it in the tables of your heart. He'll put it in your mind. When that early church went forth, do you know what they preached by? They preached by the Holy Ghost. They preached by the Word. They couldn't read it everywhere, but they had the Holy Ghost; they had the Word, and Jesus is the Word. They spoke things that were not even written because the only thing that was written then was the Old Testament. Brother, they had a message, and they had Jesus to back the Word up. Here Paul was writing to the Galatians who were trying to be justified by the law, but watch what it says. Verse 4, "*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*" Now were they lost? No. Those that were truly saved, no, they couldn't be lost. But they fell down to a level; they fell out of the realm of the grace of God they were living in and down to a place where the grace of God had to provide mercy for them. They existed on God's mercy because this Galatian church went on. There were some good people there, but they all got messed up in their teachings. I want to tell you in the name of Jesus Christ that it's important what you believe. Paul said, "I believe, and I have spoken." WE believe and WE have spoken. Amen! It was important. So this church here fell from grace. Now watch what we have seen thus far. First, after Pentecost we saw a church living strictly on the grace of God, not on mercy, but on great grace. Notice here, years and years later, we find, and this was about 58 A.D., we

find by this time, the church had done like Israel. As Israel went through a time, they began to look other ways. The church here began to fall from the favor that God had put upon them at Pentecost. Do you know why? They got their minds all confused as to whether they ought to be circumcised, whether they ought to keep the law. They could hardly find Christ anymore. They fell from grace. Do you know what they lived on? They lived on mercy.

Now I want to go to Matthew, Chapter 13. I want to show you the church after it fell. To begin with there was nothing but true Holy Ghost Word of God among them, but then there began to be some tares. Now at the end time this same parable shows that there won't be any tares. Which means one thing, simply the church is going to get back like it was in the early church, living on the grace (great grace) of God once it goes through the seven church ages. The church ages started about 53 A.D., and there were seven of them. We've come through the last one. Brother William Branham was the messenger to the last one, and when he went off the scene, then God threw it right back to a five-fold ministry; a ministry like the early church had. When we get the ministry like the early church had, then it'll get the grace like the early church had. Matthew 13:24, *"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:"* How many knows what the kingdom of heaven is? It's the church age time period. The kingdom of God is within you. You can be in the kingdom of heaven age and be in the kingdom of God, too, but the tares can't be in the kingdom of God. That is within you. The kingdom of heaven is the earthly realm of the church from the time the church fell away...let's just read it and get it out of the Word. *"...The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his*

field:" That's all that was there to start with. There wasn't anything else. Verses 25-27, *"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?"* What was sowed first? Good seed; it was great grace upon the church, but it went into seven church ages. Christ withdrew Himself, and do you know how He ministered to the church through the seven church ages? He ministered with a messenger. There was an earthly messenger and a spiritual angel. That spiritual angel came and brought that Word right to that earthly messenger and he ministered it to the age. Where was Christ? Christ had to withdraw Himself just like God did in the Old Testament. If we don't want Christ, He's not going to come in as an unwelcome guest. No, no, no. He'll just withdraw Himself and let us go on our way and make a denomination.

Verses 28-30, *"He said unto them, An enemy hath done this;.."* (That's what Satan did; sowed some things that weren't right.) *"...The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? (Watch what it says.) But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let them both grow together until the harvest:..."* Now watch here, they had to live on mercy—let them both grow together. But I want you to notice something about this plant as God represents the kingdom of heaven as plants sowed in the ground, good seed and then the tares. The roots of the tares and the wheat were all entwined together. Now listen very carefully to what I am saying here because this is very important. While the plants are green and the sap is in the root, you don't want to disturb those roots because you will hinder the growth of the plant. How many

knows that is right? You can't do it. When you pull up those tares, if they're grown together, it'll pull the roots off the wheat, also. It will cause that wheat to wither away and not produce. But notice, when the wheat comes to full age and all the sap comes out of the root up through the stalk and goes back into that seed, it doesn't matter what you do to the root, the stalk, or anything, because God's only interested in the seed. *"Let both grow together."* How long? Let them grow together through the seven church ages. Let them grow together through this *time* when the sap is in the stalk. Did you know that's the way it was in the church ages? There came the church, but it fell away. But God began to restore it back through Luther with little blades, like planting corn, it's got little blades. The life was right in those little blades, and then the stalk, and then the tassel, and then the shuck, but then it goes right back to the grain again, the life. Then it doesn't matter what you do with the tassel. It doesn't matter what you do with the shuck. It doesn't matter what you do with the root. It's already served its purpose. When it has served its purpose, what do you do? You gather them together, the stalks, and burn them with fire. What do you do with the grain? You take it into the garner. Then it doesn't matter. There's coming a time of separation. It doesn't matter in this hour about pulling up tares. God will take care of that. If the Word is in you, and I don't say we have to be hard and be cruel, God doesn't want that. I was talking to a friend of mine, a Baptist minister, not speaking against him as a person, but he started pasturing another church; I said, "How is your church doing?" He said, "Well, we have a sizeable congregation." He went on to say, "Of course, we've got some drunks; we've got some...(well, he said, "whores."), and we've got some of this, some of that, but you know that's what the Bible says, "Let them grow together."

We just don't bother them; just get them in the church. That's what we're after, just get them in." But that was for a period of time when the church was living on mercy. I believe in getting people to come to church, but if the Word I preach does not draw them and keep them, then they don't need to be there. That Word will separate them out. The Bible says that He'll come in and bring great grace back to the church again.

Verse 30 again, *"Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together (tares first) first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them..."* That's why you have these denominational systems: The World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, and they are coming together. They are binding the tares to be burned, there's no life of God in that bunch of stalks. The life of God has come back to the seed again. When you plant corn what do you want? You're not planting to get the stalk, not unless you want to put them in a silo or something. But you want to get some more corn; you want to get some more grain. And once you get the grain, do you know what you do with the stalk? I know what I had to do with mine. I had to wait until it rained to get the ground soft; then I went and pulled them up and piled them up to burn them, but not the corn. Glory to God, it came back to the original again just like it went in the ground, after the church came through seven church ages. That's why you had the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost baptism. That was the sap in the stalk. Now He has brought it back to the seed. It's going to be like Paul said, "I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in subjection as also saith the law. Amen. That's the Word, isn't it?"

Now, gather the tares together to burn. They've done been gathered. How many sees it? Yes, the World Council of

Churches has gathered up the tares. They have homosexual ministers. Brother, if that isn't tares, how blind can the world get? How blind can people get in this hour? They put their money in that and support that, thinking they are supporting the work of Christ! No, no, no. The work of Christ is something built on the Word that will respond to the Word. God has bound that bunch of tares in bundles. Now notice – living on mercy and grace. God allowed that through the seven church ages. He allowed the church to exist on mercy, and He withdrew Himself. As the church received less and less of the Word, they received less and less of the Spirit of Christ and the power of God. So they had to live on mercy for seven church ages. That's why there was a dark age. That's why the stalk was cut down, and that's why we didn't see these great things because the church existed on mercy. Because of this, one of the seven angels came and the seven Spirits of God, to each one of the seven church ages. He came and brought enough Word for that hour, for that age to survive on. Just like fertilizing a stalk of corn. Throw on a little fertilizer. Get it growing on up, on up. But what do you want? You want seed. That's what God is doing. Now watch the remainder of this verse, verse 30, "*...but gather the wheat into my barn.*" Bind the tares and burn them, but gather the wheat into the barn. In Matthew 13, there are seven parables that correspond perfectly to the seven church ages. Do you know what the last one does? There's a net cast on the sea, which was the deliverance revival of the 40's and 50's that pulled in every kind, but then the fishermen sat down and began to separate. Let me read it to you. Verse 47 is the last parable; it is what happened in the seventh church age. "*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:*" It gathered in serpents, tadpoles, frogs, driftwood,

jellyfish, and everything. Just pull the net in; pull them all into shore. That's what the deliverance revival brought into the realm of the kingdom of heaven. It brought them into church. It brought all that stuff in the church, the deliverance revival did; but watch what happened then. Verse 48, *"Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down;.."* That's why the deliverance revival is over. There's a revival for the Bride. Do you know what the revival is? Her coming to the Word and getting it in her and living by the Word. But as far as going out here for a big citywide campaign, that day is over with, Friend. God is calling His bride together, teaching her to live so He can put great grace upon her. How many knows that the revival for the world is over with? At least for America it is over. But there's a revival for the bride. What is the revival for the bride? Taking that revealed Word in.

Watch, the fishermen sat down. That's where a lot of preachers mess up today. They don't know what the Word says, and they keep going out here trying to have revivals. Do you know what they have to do then? They have to let everything come in. They have to go with the world. They have to get these Hollywood fellows out to sing and perform for them to keep the tares entertained, but God is calling His bride to the Word! The bride is not concerned about all that the net pulled in. Here's what the real preachers do, they sit down and begin to teach the people the Word of God. I remember in 1964, God called me off the field for one whole year to tell me a few things; He helped me to get in the Word.

Let's get the rest of Verse 48, *"...and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels (that's the Word), but cast the bad away."* Verse 49, *"So shall it be at the end of the world: (now notice) the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,..."* Who is an

angel? He made angels ministering spirits. His angels are His preachers that preach the Word of God that will do the separating. When God talked about the seven church age messengers, He called them angels. Paul said, "You receive me as an angel of God when I came first." I'll tell you, there is an angel speaking to you tonight. A minister of Jesus Christ that is called to bring forth the Word of God in this last day, and the call is to stay right in the middle of the Word; not get lead off on a little side trail. Come back to the Word!! Come back to what will please God! Come back to what God wants in this hour! Come back to what Peter, Paul, James, and John preached; not what the church ages did because that was the ages where they lived on mercy.

Notice now, but cast the bad away." Verses 50-52, *"And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: (they'll go right into tribulation) there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then said he unto them, (He's speaking of the seventh church age messenger.) Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man (the seventh church age messenger) that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."* Restore us back to the Word that Paul had and Peter had, and all of them, but, also, bring the new revelation of what the seven seals are. What those spiritual angels thundered (7 Thunders of Revelation 10) right through the seven church age messengers down through the seven church ages; bring forth the old and new. Brother, that's what we had through the seventh church age messenger. We had some things that are not even written in the Word, but God brought it forth. For instance, take the fifth seal, when it dealt with the Jews that was killed by Hitler and Eichmann, where it

says, "These souls under the altar saying, "How long, Lord, will thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth." We thought that was the saints that were killed down through the church ages, but the Bride doesn't cry for revenge. The Bride prays, "Forgive them, Father, they don't know what they are doing," but the Jews were crying for revenge. It was the Jews that were killed under Hitler and Eichmann and them. That's some of the new things he (the seventh church age messenger) brought out of his treasure to give to the church in this last day. But then, the seventh church age is over now as far as the Bride is concerned. They put Jesus on the outside of that last church age, and if He is outside so is the Bride.

Now watch, it has been a time when the church had to live on mercy. Let's go to 1 Peter. We want to show you Jesus coming back again. Revelation, Chapter 10, shows the same thing and II Peter 1:19, also. The prophets looked and saw something for the church, but notice, the church had fallen away, but He's going to come back again in the power of His resurrection according to Ephesians, Chapter 4. In I Peter 1:10-12, it says, "*Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves (In other words, they knew this wasn't for them.), but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (That's the way we've got to preach the Gospel.); which things the angels desire to look into.*" How do we preach the Gospel? With the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Brother, that's what you are hearing tonight, the Gospel

that's preached by the Holy Ghost; not by some schooling or some learning. I speak in the name of the Lord. In 1978 I laid up there in that room. I'd been gone from home for nine days. I was a little lonesome, a little homesick. The Holy Ghost came in and brought this. I never heard it preached before in my life, have you? But is it the Word? Does it fit the Word? Living on mercy or living on grace. They lived on mercy through the church ages, but the early church had great grace. The church fell away and had to live on mercy, but here the Word says that it's going to come back again to where the church is going to live under the great grace of God. It's going to please God.

Verse 13, *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind;.."* You didn't have to do that in deliverance revival. That's why He sat down and separated them; see, because they can't receive revelation anyway. *"...Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"* Amen. There's some grace to be brought unto you. When? After the seven church ages are over; after the days are over of living on mercy; when you come back to the seed again, and when you come back to the original Word again. Then here comes the real seed, Jesus Christ, in the power of the resurrection; in the power of what He was in the early church. Glory to God! He's going to descend with a voice, and if we have our eyes open and see the things that God has done in this hour, we can see that these things have began to fall in place. Notice now, *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind*, and that means you've got to think; be sober—you can't be a loose leaf, slop around, flop around; and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you *AT* the revelation of Jesus Christ. Please take serious notice that the church ages didn't have the revelation of Jesus Christ as is now revealed here at the end time. II Peter 1:19 speaks of the daystar that's going

to rise in your heart. It's going to be at the end time. Let's read it, (after the church ages are over). Notice 2 Peter 1:19, it says, *"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place,..."* Do you know what that more sure word of prophecy is that the people used all the way through the church ages as a light that shineth in a dark place? David tells us what it is. Thy Word is light unto my feet, a lamp unto my pathway. Amen. The Word of God they had in a certain amount as God would send a messenger, an earthly angel, to bring truth to that age. It was like a flashlight. They could see certain portions, but that's the reason they got all tangled up and made organizations and everything. One could only see predestination. Another preached eternal security. Another one preached the just shall live by faith. They made organizations. It was a little light that they could see a little bit, but the Bible says that the daystar is going to rise in your heart. What is the daystar? There isn't but one star that you can see in the daytime. Hallelujah! How many knows what it is? S-O-N. The only one you can see in the daytime. All of the rest of them (stars) fades away. Then if the S-O-N is the only one that you can see in the daytime, why do we hear and talk so much about these other stars (church age messengers)? Why do we hear the Lutheran talk about Luther all the time? Why do we hear the Methodist talk about John Wesley all the time? Why in this last day, can't we go to church without hearing Brother Branham's name fifteen times? It's all right, but I tell you, none of the other stars are seen when the SON comes up. Then in the last days, the Bible says that He comes back. He brings great grace. When? After the seven church ages are over; after the net is pulled in, and after the separation takes place. Then do you know what the Bible says after we read all those parables? You

shall shine as stars forever in the kingdom of God. You'll shine forth as bright lights for Him. Do you love Him with all of your heart? Living on mercy or grace, which one do you want to live on? Not on mercy. I'm glad there is mercy for our shortcomings, yes. That's not what I'm talking about, in that realm, but I'm talking about living a life that pleases Him so He can pat you on the back and say, "You know, I'm proud of you." I believe that's what He did last Saturday night here. That bright Daystar came in here, and I was just talking about pleasing Him, living on His grace. I believe He came in and patted us on the back to say, "Look, I'm proud of you. There's not but a few of you, but you love me. You're trying to do what's right, and I'm proud of you." Do you love Him with all your heart? Do you believe He is in our midst? Do you believe He is in the arrangements? Do you believe He's got the whole world in His hands? He's got the little bitty baby in His hands. He's got the church in His hands. He's got you and me, Brother, in His hands, and I'm glad to be there. Do you know why? Because the Bible says, "No man can pluck thee out." We're secure in the arms of

Jesus.

Let us pray. *Father, we thank you for your love, your mercy, and goodness, and power. We appreciate you. I pray that you will take these words and use them for your glory. Father, I send them in the name of Jesus. Father, I believe this was anointed of you, and ordained of you. Before the foundation of the world, I believe you chose this night for this message to this people, and I pray, Heavenly Father, that you will help us to study and let the Holy Spirit teach it to us, and may we receive that full benefit of it. We thank you Lord and we will be so careful to praise you for it in the precious name of the Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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