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THE GRACE, FAITHFULNESS, AND WILL OF GOD

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SCRIPTURE?

*It has not been my practice to re-publish here ministry of earlier times, but the address by Mr Raven does not appear to be included in the published volumes of his ministry; and the extract by Mr Wigram is not generally available but is a valuable summary of what Scripture speaks of as “precious” (Editor)*

## **THE GRACE, FAITHFULNESS, AND WILL OF GOD**

**F.E.Raven**

### **Romans 12**

My wish in this address is to say a practical word, and not so much the presentation of doctrine.

There is one thing that affects us practically for good, and as far as I know, it is the only thing that does so. I do not think we are greatly affected by doctrine. My impression is that the way people are rightly affected in this world is by the knowledge of God.

Men in general are affected by the world. If a man be unconverted, he knows nothing but the world; he may know a little of God's providence, but he has no true thought of God in his heart, he has no light of God there, and is necessarily directed and governed by the world. The world suffices for him, and beyond that, with the exception of the providence of God, he knows nothing. If we are to be rightly affected down here, the only thing which will do this is the knowledge of God. This is not imagination, but the knowledge of God, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself in the gospel, and is the effective principle in every one of us. If there be anything in my walk and conversations, according to God, anything morally right, it is the effect at the knowledge of God; the light of the knowledge of God has illuminated my heart, and, thus illuminated, that light is the greatest factor in my ways down here in the world. It is on that ground the apostle exhorts the Romans here: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice;” he had been unfolding the revelation of God, bringing all through the epistle the light of God's testimony to

bear upon them, that they might be fully in the light, and now he exhorts them on that ground.

I may presently go into the detail in regard to these exhortations, but I want first to speak a little on the basis, to give a brief outline, and not much more than that, of what precedes in the epistle.

If you study the epistle you will find that two things are especially brought to light, the *grace* and the *faithfulness* of God, and it is in these two aspects we are permitted to know God. There is more, it is true, to be learned about God, something that underlies that, and that is the love of God; but I wish now to dwell on that in which it has pleased God to present Himself to man in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is in grace and faithfulness, the two being combined, not contrary to one another.

God has come out in the reign of grace, but the apostle takes great care to vindicate the faithfulness of God to His engagements. The grace of God comes out in chapters 1 and 5 of Romans, and the faithfulness of God in chapters 9, 10 and 11, and having brought all this is before them, the apostle proceeds in chapter 12 to exhort them to present their bodies to God a living sacrifice for His will.

What marks the present moment is this, God has been pleased to establish the reign of grace, and the kingdom of God is the reign of grace. I do not know whether we have all been accustomed to connect these two thoughts. Some people think the kingdom of God merely represents the claims and authority of God, but the apostle preached the *glad tidings* of the kingdom of God, and so also did the Lord. The kingdom indicates, that God has established the reign of grace; that is the character of His kingdom, and He has established it through righteousness. Now, righteousness means that man as after the flesh has been completely removed from under the eye of God by sacrifice. No one can overrate the importance of this, for it is where righteousness comes in. The case of man from the outset was irremediable. The moment man asserted his own will, his case was hopeless; it could

not be remedied. What has come to pass in the death of Christ is this, that the old man has been removed through sacrifice. God pronounced the sentence of death in Eden, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die", and God has never recalled that sentence, but He has removed the man that came under it from under His eye in the death of Christ. The condition of man was condemned in the cross, and to the glory of God, in a sacrifice, which has its own proper value; God is glorified, and the man is completely removed. It is a point of much moment, and scripture is plain enough about it, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh". Condemned man after that order. That is connected with the truth of, "Having put off the old man". That man has been crucified and condemned, but condemned in a sacrifice, which had its own proper value in the eye of God, and therefore God has been glorified in it.

You cannot take one single step in divine things without apprehending this: some have looked upon the sacrifice of Christ as only efficacious to take away sin. That is not the whole question. The great point is the removal of the man. The man that offended against God has been effectually removed from under the eye of God, and the blood is the witness, the witness of death. It is the witness of death (not merely that sin is gone), and therefore the order of man with which sin was connected is removed from under God's eye in Christ's sacrifice, and as regards Christians, we have all to come to it in our own minds. What *actually* took place in Christ we have now to come to in the spirit of our minds. Christ was *actually* crucified, but the Christian is now able to say, I am crucified with Him. The apostle had come to that mind; he was crucified with Christ; and the result is that God has been pleased to establish the reign of grace in the Man raised again from the dead; God was glorified in the sacrifice of Christ, and Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and in Him the kingdom of grace, the rule of grace subsists.

This is the first principle of Christianity. What the apostle preached to everybody was the kingdom of God. He speaks of it

everywhere; he preached “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”, the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, the established rule of God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the sacrifice of Christ God has been completely glorified. Christ could not be holden of death; He is a divine Person; He might enter into death as made sin, but could not remain in it, for He is the Resurrection, and therefore He came forth from the grave, raised again the third day, and now grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Him. Now, what is our place in regard to it? We are under the *sway*, and the *rule of grace*. The soul of the Christian is under the sway of grace; I will show you how grace applies to us. It is a very important point; we must be under the sway of grace so long as it pleases God to leave us down here. You are not under law but under grace, under the sway of grace, and I wish to show you its application, and the first point is you are justified. I do not think justification is exactly an *act* of God, but the *attitude* of God towards man is that of Justifier. Grace is God’s attitude towards every man in the world. When I discern the attitude of God, I am justified freely by grace. Every man might be justified in God’s grace if he apprehended God’s attitude. As to the Lord Jesus Christ, what is come to pass is this, the reign of grace is established in One who has fully presented God to man. There is not another in the whole universe who could have done this, therefore the reign of grace is established in Him. God could be and has been perfectly presented to man, and there never could have been the kingdom of God without this. It was essential that He should be fully presented to man in the Lord Jesus, and thus in Him the reign of grace is established. The gospel is preached to every creature under heaven, as Christ “gave himself a ransom for all” – God’s righteousness is consequently towards all, and in apprehending this attitude of God, I am under grace, and am justified. God has now no other thought towards man. There will come a time when God will assume a different attitude, but now He is a Justifier. “Being justified by faith we have peace with God”. The point in the gospel is, not that Christ gave Himself for the elect, but that God “will have all men

to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth". His attitude towards all is declaring His righteousness. Of course, there is this, His righteousness is "upon all them that believe". They have apprehension in their souls of the attitude of God, and are without imputation. There is no possibility of imputing sin to one whom God has justified. The reign of grace is founded on righteousness. What can God have to say to us but grace if we believe in that Man? The man that sinned has been removed. I was that man, but then in the sacrifice *that I* is gone, I have been removed, and what other thought can God have towards me but grace? It is in grace that God has presented Himself to me in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is His attitude towards all.

Now, the next point as to the Christian is the application of grace to him in his course. There are two passages I want to turn to; one is Romans 6 verse 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace". Dominion is the expression of the kingdom. You are not under law, but you are under the principle or rule of grace.

See also Hebrews 4, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (v 16). The throne shows the supremacy, the dominion of grace. I want to make plain the difference between being under law, and under grace. Suppose I were placed under law, and I have offended, committed some sin; the result is I am guilty, and there is no remedy for me. Suppose a man who has transgressed against the law of his country, stolen something from his neighbour; there is no remedy for that man, he must suffer the penalty of the law. He must be brought before the magistrates, and he will have to suffer the penalty of the law.

Now if a man be under grace, I will tell you what it will do. You are conscious of some defect or of something in which flesh has come out, and you have turned aside, perhaps followed some impulse of your own will, or what not; there are very few who have not erred in some way; well, when grace acts, it shows you the point of departure, it does not saddle you with the penalty of the offence,

but shows you the point of departure, and brings you back in spirit to the point from which you departed. You come boldly to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help. Law would bring down upon me my transgression, but grace shows me what was really the point of departure, and brings me back to that. This is the operation of grace. At the same time I am justified completely, outside the possibility of charge. Thus, in passing through the world, if we make mistakes, or fall into snares, grace comes in to show us the point of departure, to bring us back that there may be recovery. That is the operation of grace in one under its sway. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life: grace will have its own way, and bring about its own result.

The first apprehension of the gospel brings us under the sway of grace, and the blessed result is, grace never ceases to support, help, and encourage us until we come to the end, and that is eternal life. Eternal life is looked at in Romans as the end to which we are to come. The free gift of God is eternal life, and the operation and the application of grace is to bring you to God's purpose, and that is eternal life. And if you turn aside, grace comes to show you the defect, and bring you back, and that is the way we know the reign of grace.

What power in the universe but grace could restore an erring man? The greatest comfort I know is that the man that offended against God has been removed, and the righteousness of God vindicated, so that God can have no attitude towards man but grace. It is not merely that sin is gone, but the man is gone.

But grace does not end in my being justified; the throne of grace subsists, and shows me in case of departure what nothing else in the universe could show, but grace. Being brought back to the point of departure, I go on to the purpose of God concerning me, and that is to eternal life; for grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Christ was the expression and also the Minister of the grace of God, and when here "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with him". He was the Minister of the grace of God, and revealed to man the heart of

God. That was the ministry of the Lord Jesus during the three and a half years of His service down here. There was more to do, righteousness had to be established, the sinful man to be removed, never to be revived. That is what the crucifixion meant, that man is never to be revived; but the Man which came from heaven, is raised again from the dead, and now we see in Him the rule and dominion of grace.

We have also to learn another quality of God, and that too is very important, viz.: His faithfulness. God presents Himself to the heart of man in a way that ought to produce unbounded confidence in God. If I understand the work of God's grace at all, it is that He so sets Himself before men in the Lord Jesus Christ that the heart of man may repose unbounded confidence in Himself. If I have apprehended His grace, and the way in which it works, and go on to learn His faithfulness, my heart gains this confidence. I have learned His grace as in the early chapters of Romans, but His faithfulness comes out in chapters 9, 10 and 11. You may be acquainted with these qualities, but look at them again. You will observe that this section of the epistle begins with the promises of God to Abraham, and ends with the ultimate restoration of Israel. Now, the ultimate restoration of Israel is the carrying out of the original promises to Abraham. A good many things have come in between; the Jews are cast off, the Gentiles brought in, and then the Gentiles are cut off before the Jews are restored to their own proper place in the olive tree. But God is never turned aside from His purpose. The promise to Abraham will be literally fulfilled in Israel in the future, for, "there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob". On the ground of mercy they will come into the promises made to Abraham. The first impression they will get is that Jesus is Jehovah. You have the full showing forth of Jehovah in Jesus, and it is a most important moral lesson exhibiting the unfailing faithfulness of Jehovah. He may bring the Gentiles into blessing for the time being, but in the due time He will most assuredly fulfil the promises to Abraham. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance". God is faithful, He holds the whole world in the grip of

His hand, He lets nothing go, all will be fulfilled, and all is filling out the great purpose of God; all will bring about the purpose which He has set Himself to accomplish, and the light of that is of great moment to the Christian. It gives his heart great confidence in God, he sees God patiently going on generation after generation, never defeated, but carrying out His own purpose, and He will to the end. The Jew, degraded as he is, lost as he is to all sense of right, will be brought back into the land and be blest, and all Israel will be blest in the promises made to Abraham.

The special name by which we know God is that of Father, but it is important to remember that Christians have the benefit of every name by which God has been pleased to reveal Himself. We are the children of Him in whom Abraham believed, viz., the Almighty. Then there is the word quoted in chapter 10, "Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved". Thus you have the benefit of Jehovah's name. All this is brought before us here to form a foundation in the Christian. It shows what pains God takes with us to form in us a moral basis in the knowledge of Himself. The object is that we may have right desires, and discernment of good and evil. Ruined by the fall, God comes in to lay a foundation in my soul in the knowledge of Himself, and to make me acquainted with His grace and faithfulness in the Lord Jesus Christ. The true way of being established in the word of God is to know the faithfulness of God. It binds together every part, and every part is for the glory of God.

This is a rather long introduction, but we come now to the opening verses of chapter 12: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not

the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching: or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity: he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness”.

Now, there have been two things presented in this world; one is Christ, the Anointed of God; and the other, the will of God. The Anointed, that is the meaning of the name Christ. Christ is identical with Messiah. Both express the Anointed of God. He took that place, the Anointed of the Holy Ghost to be here for God’s will, that in the power of the Holy Ghost, the will of God might be set forth in man.

Now, everything follows on these lines. You must have in Christians the very things seen in Christ. You must have the will of God, and that is the one great point that comes out here. Everything in which the will of God can be set forth must of necessity come from Christ at the right hand of God. What will God have in this world but what is of Christ? Christ was once here on earth, and He will have nothing short of that. Nothing else will suit Him. It must be all Christ.

Do you think men can please God in taking up His word, and using at the same time the ways of the world? It is impossible (now that Christ has been here upon earth for the will of God) that anything can be acceptable to God unless what is of and from Christ by the Spirit. That is what comes out here, the will of God.

We most of us remember Psalm 40, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” God’s will has been set in the presence of man down here in Christ, and for that will to be carried out (and it must be carried out), all must come from Christ; and you and I are to present our bodies a living sacrifice for this purpose.

I used to think a sacrifice was that which was subjected to death. Now I think the idea of sacrifice is rather that which is devoted and cannot be recalled. It is impossible there can be a sacrifice without a sacrifice. I think we all know the idea of sacrifice. Man does not make a sacrifice to God without a sacrifice.

So as regards the body, I should like well enough to use my body as I would. But now it is devoted and offered up to God; I can myself live to God in Christ, and therefore in all the activities of life my body is devoted to God, and cannot be recalled. Take care what you do with your body. You cannot do anything without your body. It is not possible for man to carry out any activity without his body. But as to a Christian, it is a living sacrifice, and what for? It is devoted to God for His will.

Now another thing, my mind is renewed; there is a perfect change of mind, a new mind in that way, but why changed? That you may, "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God". The will of God is put in contrast to this world; thus there are two things brought before the mind of a Christian: one is the will of God, and the other is this age. Most of us are tolerably well acquainted with this age; we know its character. It is an age not at all acceptable to God; it is an evil age. Christ died for our sins "that he might deliver us from this present evil world". Satan is the god and prince of it; the present age has to come to an end, and will in judgment; it is the present age in which anti-christ will be manifested, not another age; he comes out in this. But, on the other hand, the Christian is put in presence of the will of God, and it refers here especially to the church. The church is at present that in which is expressed the will of God. The Lord when on earth began to speak about the church; He frequently spoke to the disciples in reference to the coming of the Spirit. He said to them at the close of His course here, that they were to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said He, ye have heard of Me. He spoke too of His flock, how He had come into the fold to lead out His sheep, and how He would bring other sheep, and that there would be one flock, one Shepherd. He was bringing out in anticipation the will of God, starting with the

church, the Holy Ghost dwelling here, and Jew and Gentile being formed into one body; thus we get the will of God. And the will of God put in the strongest contrast to this world. Christianity was never intended to form a part of this world. It was intended to be in the strongest contrast to it. God never intended there should be the mixture of the church and the world, which there is. It is the work of the enemy, never the work of God. The work of God was His will, it was put in presence here in Christ, and the Holy Ghost was given that there should be complete sanctification. We are set apart by the death of Christ, and the Holy Ghost came down that the church might be practically set apart to God.

You know what has come to pass. The world laid stumbling-blocks before the church, and it has fallen under the power of the world. You have not in this country even a system such as popery, which is an apostate imitation of the real thing; it professes to stand apart from the world, but is the most wicked thing that was ever invented. But here we have a national church, the head of the state being the head of the church. Therefore the one thing for us is to apprehend what was in the beginning, and retire in spirit from all that is about us. We want our mind renewed that we may “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. Whatever man has done, God has not departed from His purpose. God is faithful in regard to His purpose both as to the church and Israel.

Now, how are we to be here for the will of God? If you are here for the will of God, you will be beneficial to man, but you will be beneficial to man according to God. Man can be beneficial to man in a kind of philanthropic way, but as a Christian I am beneficial to man according to God, and that limitation makes the greatest possible difference. Christ was most beneficial to man when here on earth. Was there ever such a benefactor to man? But it was according to God. Not a benefactor according to man’s thoughts, but according to God’s thoughts.

Now, that is what gift accomplishes for us. Gift comes down from an ascended Christ, and an impression is given of Christ so that there may be an expression of Christ from us in grace to man

down here. That is the effect of gift. Every gift was expressed in Christ, and therefore whatever gift there may be in the church, it can be but a reproduction of what was seen in Christ. Everything combined in Him when He was on earth; and now at the right hand of God in divine power, all comes out in those gifted of Christ, "according to the measure of the gift of Christ". The way in which it is effected is this. An impression is given of Christ, in order that in us in detail there may be some expression of Christ down here upon earth, that we may be beneficial to man according to God.

A philanthropist does not benefit man according to God: he benefits man according to man's thoughts. A Christian is gifted from Christ; the source of everything here for man is from Christ. If I have a gift from Christ, I am beneficial to man, and an evangelist is the greatest gift. But then the evangelist benefits man according to God. It is a poor benefit to give a trifle to a beggar. What will he do with it? With the gospel you benefit man more than any worldly benefaction can benefit him; you benefit that man according to God. That is the character of what comes down from Christ. "Silver and gold have I none", said Peter, "but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk". The evangelist can say, I have the gospel for you.

A man with mercy shows mercy because Christ has shown it. I see every gift concentrated in Him when He was here upon earth, and there can be no gift now, but what it an expression of Christ.

It is perfectly delightful to think of Christ in the place of supreme power, honour, and glory at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost down here, and all the gifts come down from an ascended Christ to the members of His body on the earth, that we may be beneficial to man according to the mind and thought of God: you are thus informed and instructed in the will of God; you have your mind renewed, then avail yourselves of the gifts which have come down from an ascended Christ, and you will be beneficial to man according to God. I do not wish to be ruled according to the thoughts and opinions of men, but by Christ at the right hand of God.

All gifts have come down from Him, and we should be faithful in the use of them.

The exhortations given indicate the way in which the gift is to be used. If a man has a certain gift, say mercy, he is to show it with cheerfulness. And so too if he rules, he is to do it with diligence. It is not simply that you use the gift, but it tells you the way in which you should use it. The best thing is to be done in the very best way, so that there may be a representation of Christ down here in this world for the will of God.

I desired to give a practical word, but that would be of no use without a good solid foundation of the knowledge of God in our hearts: then we can be practical. I do not care for practice otherwise, as the effect can only be feeble and legal. But if founded on the knowledge of God, it is not legal, but you are here for the will of God, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, who has come down from an exalted Christ at the right hand of God.

**Lecture at Exeter**



# **THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST WHAT ARE ITS USES AND APPLICATIONS BY THE SPIRIT IN SCRIPTURE?**

**G.V. Wigram**

If we read the contexts of the following references, we shall see, as to the blood of Jesus Christ, that:

1. It connects the disciple with a covenant (Matt 26: 28 etc.);
2. The knowledge of it is eternal life (John 6: 32-69);
3. It is the proof of the death of Jesus (John 19: 33);
4. The purchase money of the flock (Acts 20: 28);
5. The propitiation provided by God (Rom 3: 25);
6. The finished justification (Rom 5:9);
7. The centre of union among the saints on earth (1 Cor 10: 16);
8. Freedom from guilt (Eph 1: 7);
9. Our nighness – to God as sons – to Christ as bride – to the Holy Ghost as temple (Eph 2: 13);
10. Redemption, even the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1: 14);
11. The power of deliverance from Satan's kingdom into Christ's (Col 1: 20);
12. The secured approach of the sinner to the holiest where God dwells, and Christ, who gives good things to come (Heb 9: 7-12);
13. It is to be known as such (Heb 9: 12-14);
14. Both the place to which it thus leads, and the blessings of the place (as well as the people for whom they are) are connected with it (Heb 9: 18-28).

15. It is the taking away of sin, the setting apart of the saints to God, and that by which they are already perfected (Heb 10: 11-14);
16. The power of heavenly filial service (Heb 10: 19);
17. The sanctification of those that know it (Heb. 10: 27-31; 13: 12);
18. The measure of our obedience to God (Heb 12: 1-4);
19. The testimony of good things to us, but judgement on the world (Heb 12: 24);
20. The sanctification as of an eternal covenant (Heb 13: 12, 20);
21. The knowledge of it is the proof of election (1 Peter 1: 2);
22. It is the saint's ransom (1 Peter 1: 18);
23. The saint's daily resource for cleansing (1 John 1: 7);
24. God's witness upon earth (1 John 5: 8);
25. The cleansing of our persons – so sung of on earth (Rev 1: 5);
26. Our redemption so sung of in heaven (Rev 5: 9);
27. The cleansing of our robes (Rev 7: 14);
28. The victory over Satan (Rev 12: 11).

The blood, the death, and the cross of Jesus (though all found together in *the* one great act of man's rebellion against God), are often presented by the Spirit as having different things more immediately connected with each of them. At present I shall only speak of the blood. The blood, when spoken of as known so as to be valued, always seems to involve, more or less remotely, the idea of atonement. In itself it is atonement; even that by which *alone* God can be just, and yet the justifier of the sinner; and, so it is that which not only enables God to bless, but the sinner to draw near for blessing. And yet it has more uses and applications in connection

with atonement, than most are aware. For it may be looked at as presented with the view of giving eternal life to them that believe; as in itself propitiation; as the removal of sin; as justification, forgiveness, nearness, peace; as that which alone cleanses the conscience of a sinner, or can keep a saint's conscience clean; which has cleansed the person in one place, and the robes in another; which is redemption – an approach to the holiest – the securer and retainer of that place – our purchase money – our sanctification – the proof of our election – our power over Satan, the power and measure of our obedience to God, that in which we have communion one with another the seal of the everlasting covenant. In such various lights does the Spirit make mention of the blood! May the saints, however weak, know God's estimate of the blood in all varied applications of it, and, through the Spirit, learn to adopt God's estimate, and to set aside their own.

Ignorance of the blood, or carelessness to it, is the world's condemnation. Passages bearing upon this I shall not now notice, except as connected with the saint's victory over the world – writing merely with the view of endeavouring to help Christians to see the blood as connected with themselves. May the Holy Spirit, who bears witness with the blood, reveal to us that which flesh and blood cannot, while we muse on these things!

**From:     The Inquirer**

**1840**