

## In Christ, We Lack Nothing that We Need

In this series of articles I've been focusing, primarily, on the important doctrines taught in John 1:14. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." In my most recent article I called our attention to the phrase translated, "the only Son from the Father.." We saw that the phrase "only Son," as it relates to Jesus, focuses on the fact that Jesus is "the unique Son" and that we receive forgiveness in him. Today I want to begin our look at the last phrase in this verse, "full of grace and truth."

We hear the word "grace" so often that it's entirely possible that we may often fail to see the *beauty* of grace. If we look at almost any Greek lexicon we'll find that the word translated "grace" basically means "...favor or help." It came to be connected to "goodwill and even kindness." When the focus is on the grace given in Jesus Christ, the grace received is always *unmerited and undeserved*. Of all that could be said of grace, John points us, initially, to grace and truth as *character qualities* of the Word. John has already told us that "the Word *is God*." That being the case, John is giving us this information for an important reason. He's not merely pointing to Jesus being a kind, gracious and truthful person, as much as pointing us, once again, to the fact that the *character qualities that are inherent in the Word are also character qualities that are inherent in God*.

In the Old Testament book of Exodus we read that Moses is to go back up on the mountain to receive the *new tablets* of stone from God after the first ones had been broken connected to the incident of the "golden calf" in Exodus 32. It's at this time that Moses says to God, "Please show me your glory." God replies, "I will make my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you the *name* of the LORD." In most instances, when scripture speaks of the *name* of God, it's addressing, not a formal name as such, but rather, his character, i.e., that which is inherent in him and which distinguishes him from other "gods," so called, worshiped in the nations surrounding Israel. All that he is and does is tied directly to his *name*. In Exodus 34:5-6 when the LORD passes before Moses, this is what the scripture says. "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the *name* of the LORD.....The LORD, the LORD, merciful and *gracious*, slow to anger, and *abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness*." God's "love and faithfulness" can *never* be separated from his "truthfulness" (Psalm 119:159-160). This "fullness of grace and truth" then, aligns with what's recorded in Exodus about the Covenant God who is "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." We can't miss the connection. Jesus truly is *the Son of God*. God himself, in the person of the Jesus Christ,

is “*full of grace and truth*,” and “many beheld his glory” firsthand. And so, just as grace and truth are character qualities of God, *grace and truth are character qualities inherent in the Word*.

Verse 15 is really a parenthetical statement that connects back to verses 6-8. These verses touch on, in some detail, the ministry of John the Baptist as a Witness of the truth of Jesus Christ. Verse 16 follows naturally from what John the apostle is saying here at the end of verse 14. The Word is “full of grace and truth” and then verse 16, “And from his fullness *we have all received*, grace upon grace.” Notice that John is saying that the *grace* of the Word is poured out *in abundance* on undeserving sinners. Christians receive God’s grace out of the *fullness* of the Word made flesh. The *fullness* that John is referring to here directly points to the fullness of all that Jesus is as *God incarnate*. In Colossians 1:19 Paul gets at this same idea when he writes, “For in him (Jesus) all the *fullness of God* was pleased to dwell.” And then in Colossians 2:9: “For in him (Jesus) the *whole fullness* of deity dwells bodily and *you have been filled in him...*” All of the grace, i.e., the unmerited favor and help, that we need for our sinful condition, we’ve received in Jesus. When John writes, “*we have all received*, grace upon grace,” it’s clear that he means all those who have received God’s *special saving grace* in Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is to be a child of God! Christians are lacking nothing that we need to live our lives to the glory of God!

*Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.*