

Future Grace

The Purifying Power of the Promises of God
Living by Faith in Future Grace

Definitions

Future: That part of time yet to be experienced.

Grace: God's omnipotent commitment to do only what is good for his unworthy people, bringing them into glorified conformity to Christ and all-satisfying joy in fellowship with him.

That is: fulfilling all God's promises to them because of Christ. This includes the help arriving in the next ten seconds, our inheritance in the resurrection arriving possibly centuries from now, and everlasting demonstrations of his kindness in Christ Jesus.



Definitions (cont)

Faith: Receiving Christ as the supremely valuable treasure that he is, and being satisfied with all that God promises to be for us in him.

Past Grace: All the good that God has ever done for his undeserving people before this present instant in their lives. The death of Christ and his resurrection are the foundational acts of past grace that give rise to all the others his people enjoy—past and future.



Living by Faith in Future Grace

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped.

Hebrews 11:8, 10

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out . . .
For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations,
whose designer and builder is God.

1 Peter 4:11

Whoever serves, [do so] as one who serves by the strength
that God supplies.



Why Does It Matter?

Because God says all our behavior—our living—should make him look supremely glorious.

1 Corinthians 10:31

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Matthew 5:16

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.



Why Does It Matter?

We will see that living by faith in future grace draws attention to the glory of God.

1 Peter 4:11

Whoever serves, [let him do it] as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.



Why Does It Matter?

God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him. And we will see that living by faith in future grace means being satisfied in God's future grace.

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.



Why Does It Matter?

Another reason why this matters is that practical holiness (that is, the purifying effects of living by faith in future grace) is necessary for final salvation.

Hebrews 12:14

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

James 2:17

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.



Why Does It Matter?

Galatians 6:8-9

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.



Why Does It Matter?

1 John 2:4

Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.



The Problem Raised by the Necessity of Holiness

If we are justified once for all by grace through faith *apart from works* at the point of true conversion, then how can our final salvation be conditional upon a transformed life of holiness?

Romans 3:28

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Solution Given by the Westminster Confession, Chapter XI

(1) Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone . . . (2) Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; *yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is not dead faith, but worketh by love.*

The Crucial Question

Why does practical holiness (i.e. love) inevitably accompany justifying faith?

Faith itself is the agent of the works. They do not merely *accompany* faith. They come through or by faith. Faith is the agent that produces the works. And it does so necessarily. Thus the works are evidence of true faith, and are not the means of our salvation the way faith is. They are the evidence that faith is real and thus are necessary for final salvation. But they are not the *ground* of our salvation, the way the death and righteousness of Christ are, nor are our works the *means* of our salvation, the way faith is.

An Illustration

An illustration of how God will judge us “according to” our works on the last day.

The analogy of the prostitutes with the baby in 1 Kings 3:16-27:

First, be assured that the judgment will be “according to works”-- “He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (Rom 2:6–7).

Now recall the story of how two harlots brought a baby to king Solomon, each claiming that the baby was hers.

How, then, does Faith Do this Great Work of Sanctification?

Faith severs the root of sin. Sin has power by promising a better tomorrow (or at least a better this evening) and by promising superior satisfactions. But true faith is of such a nature that it severs the root of sin by embracing a better future and providing a deeper satisfaction. The future grace of God is the better future and faith in future grace is that deeper satisfaction. When you live by faith in future grace, the power of sin is broken by the power of a superior satisfaction in all that God promises to be for us in Christ.

Faith is the Great Worker

1 Thessalonians 1:3

We give thanks to God always for all of you... remembering before our God and Father your *work of faith* and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:11

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every *work of faith* by his power.



Faith is the Great Worker

Acts 26:18

[I send you] to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are *sanctified by faith* in me.

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only *faith working through love*.



Grace as Future Power

The grace in which we trust is not only God's disposition to save the unworthy, but the power of God exerted to bless us in the future with all that we need

1 Corinthians 15:10

But by the *grace* of God I am what I am, and his *grace* toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the *grace* of God that is with me.

Grace as Future Power

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all *grace* abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

2 Corinthians 12:9

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Conclusion

Therefore, though grace was given to us “before the ages began” (2 Timothy 1:9), and was the disposition of God that moved him to send his son to die for us (Romans 3:24), it is also a divine power promised for our entire future, and given for our present experience.

Faith Is Profoundly and Pervasively Future-Oriented

Faith can look *back* and believe a truth about the past (like the truth that Christ died for our sins). It can look *out* and trust a person (like the personal receiving of Jesus Christ). And it can look *forward* and be assured about a promise (like, “I will be with you to the end of the age”).

But even when faith embraces a past reality, its saving essence includes the embrace of the implications of that reality for the present *and the future*.

Faith Is Profoundly and Pervasively Future-Oriented

Romans 5:10

If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son [past], much more, now that we are reconciled [present], shall we be saved by his life [future].

Thus when faith looks back and embraces “the death of his Son,” it also embraces the reconciliation of the *present* and the salvation of the *future*.

Faith Is Profoundly and Pervasively Future-Oriented

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9

For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.

Conclusion

Saving faith is profoundly and pervasively future-oriented. *There is no saving act of faith—whether looking back to history, out to a person, or forward to a promise—that does not include a future orientation.*

Therefore, faith banks on and embraces the future that God promises and thus breaks the power of sin which lures us with the deceitful promise of a happier future.

Faith Is Being Satisfied with All God Promises to Be for Us in Christ.

John 6:35

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Therefore, faith includes love for God in the sense of valuing him and treasuring him above all else. And so faith is a being satisfied in all that God is for us -- and promises to be for us in Jesus.

Therefore, faith severs the root of sin which is the promise sin makes for a better future and a better satisfaction.

The Function of Past Grace: Solid Ground Under Faith in Future Grace

Romans 8:32

He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Hebrews 4:14-16

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

What Is the Role of the Holy Spirit in Enabling Obedience?

Galatians 3:5

Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with *faith*?

Why Does the Spirit Unite Himself to Faith as the Way of Bringing about the Works of Love?

Because the Holy Spirit's mission is to glorify Jesus, and so makes conscious faith in Christ-exalting promises the means by which he works.

John 16:14

He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.



How Does Faith in Future Grace Produce Love?

Galatians 5:6

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

1 Timothy 1:5

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.



How Does Faith in Future Grace Produce Love?

Matthew 5:43-44

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



How Does Faith in Future Grace Produce Love?

Matthew 7:9-12

Which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?

¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! ¹² So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

How Does Faith in Future Grace Produce Love?

Luke 14:12-14

He said also to the man who had invited him, “When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, ¹⁴ and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. *For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.*”

How Does Faith in Future Grace Produce Love?

Hebrews 11:24-26

By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,²⁵ choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.²⁶ He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward.

How Does Faith in Future Grace Produce Love?

Hebrews 12:1b-2

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,
despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the
throne of God.



How does Faith in Future Grace Defeat Specific Sins?

Defeating the Unbelief of Anxiety

Definition: The loss of confident security in God accompanied by feelings of uneasiness or foreboding that something harmful is going to happen.



Defeating Anxiety

Matthew 6:25-33

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin,²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ . . . But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.



Defeating Anxiety

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Matthew 6:34

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.



Defeating Anxiety

Psalm 56:3

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

1 Peter 5:7

Cast all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.



Defeating Anxiety about Being Useless

1 Corinthians 15:58

Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Defeating Anxiety about Feeling Weak

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

[Christ] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Defeating Anxiety about Difficult Decisions

Psalm 32:8

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Psalm 25:8-9

Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way. ⁹ He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.



Defeating Anxiety about Afflictions

Romans 5:3-5

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Defeating Anxiety about Aging

Isaiah 46:3-4

Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; ⁴ even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save.



Defeating Anxiety about Not Persevering to the End in Faith

Philippians 1:6

I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Jeremiah 32:40

I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.



Defeating Against Anxiety about Death

Romans 14:7-9

None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself.
⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Defeating Covetousness

Definition: Desiring something not for God's glory or in such a way that we lose our contentment in God as our supreme Treasure.

Hebrews 13:5-6

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶ So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

Philippians 4:19

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Defeating Covetousness

Philippians 4:11-13

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret [Phil. 3:8!] of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Defeating Lust

Definition: Pursuing illicit thoughts or images in the mind with a view to stimulating sexual pleasures – with or without external stimuli.

Lust Grows out of Deception—Suppressing the Knowledge of God and His Promises

Ephesians 4:22

Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.



Defeating Lust

1 Peter 1:14

As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former *ignorance*.

1 Thessalonians 4:4-5

Each one of you [should] know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵ not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles *who do not know God*.



Defeating Lust

Lust is overcome by being satisfied with the promises of God—mainly, friendship with God!

2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.



Defeating Lust

Be killing lust (by faith in future grace) or lust will be killing you.

Romans 8:13

If you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.



Defeating Bitterness and an Unforgiving Spirit

Definition: Holding a grudge or savoring the thought of getting even with no true desire for the salvation and reconciliation of the offending person.

A Crucial Consideration of Bygone Grace

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.



Defeating Bitterness and an Unforgiving Spirit

The future grace you will receive overcomes the need for vengeance.

Matthew 5:11-12

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.



Defeating Bitterness and an Unforgiving Spirit

The promise of God's vengeance releases you from that role.

1 Peter 2:21-23

For to this [unjust suffering] you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued handing over [his cause] to him who judges justly.

Defeating Bitterness and an Unforgiving Spirit

The promise of God's vengeance releases you from that role (cont.).

Romans 12:19

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

In the End There Will Be No Unrecompensed Sins

They will all be duly punished, either in the cross (Isaiah 53:6) or in hell (2 Thessalonians 7-10). We may leave that finally to God.



Defeating Impatience

Definition: Murmuring against Providence when we are forced to walk the path of obedience in an unplanned place or an unplanned pace.

Genesis 45:7 (The story of Joseph)

And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

Genesis 50:20

As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.



Defeating Impatience

Romans 8:28

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

B.B. Warfield: “He will so govern all things that we shall reap only good from what befalls us.” (*Faith and Life*, p. 204)

Defeating Impatience

God Works While We Patiently Wait

Isaiah 64:4

From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides you, who acts for those who wait for him.

Psalm 40:1-3

I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. ² He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

Defeating Impatience

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

Final Summary of Living by Faith in Future Grace

1. Grace is all that God promises to be for us in Christ.
2. Faith is being satisfied in that ever-arriving grace.
3. This satisfaction in God defeats the deceit of sin.
4. Love is the result of seeking the fullness of our God-centered satisfaction in the eternal satisfaction of others.
5. God's glory is magnified in the manifestation of his grace.

William Cowper's Hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"

God moves in a mysterious way
his wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
and rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
of never failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs
and works his sovereign will.

You fearful saints, fresh courage take;
the clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
in blessings on your head.



William Cowper's Hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"

His purposes will ripen fast,
unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
but sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
and scan his work in vain:
God is his own interpreter,
and he will make it plain.

