



PREPARING TO STAND

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“In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” SW 3-21-1905

“Grace” by Jim Buller

“Grace” has typically been defined as, “God’s unmerited favor.” But this definition means essentially the same thing as “mercy.” It *is* true that we don’t deserve God’s favor or mercy. But as one reads through the Bible, especially the New Testament, it seems that when the writers used the word “grace,” they had more in mind than just God feeling favorable and being merciful toward us.

As an example, let’s look at James chapter 4. As we read through the first six verses, notice the progression, as James describes:

First, a problem
Next, the cause of the problem
And Finally, God’s solution for the problem

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in you members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on you pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, ‘The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?’ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’” James 4:1-6

What is the problem that is described here? —“fights ... among you.” Some versions say, “quarrels.” And what is the cause of the fighting and quarreling? —our selfish “desires for pleasure.” The middle part of this passage talks about the conflicts among ourselves, and between ourselves and God. But in the last two sentences James gives God’s solution —“He gives more *grace*.” More than just mercy, or a favorable feeling, “grace” is God’s solution to the conflicts caused by our sinful desires.

But remember, God is all about permanent solutions. His goal is a universe full of peace and harmony. So He isn’t going to just “patch things up,” or “treat symptoms.”

He isn't just going to make the trouble caused by our selfish desires to go away. His solution is to go to the root, or cause, of the problem. Only by getting rid of the *cause* can there be any assurance that the problem will not pop back up and cause trouble again. Since *grace* is God's solution to the conflicts caused by our sinful desires, to "fix" the problem, *grace must* therefore be able to *get rid* of our selfish desires. Grace, must therefore be able to *change* us, so that we don't even *want* sinful things any more! This is much more than just God being merciful and feeling favorable toward us.

But, as we look at the last part of Romans chapter 7, we find that even changing our sinful desires isn't enough. Notice what Paul is saying in the last part of verse 18 and verse 19. "For to will is present with me, but how to preform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will [or want] to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice." Here Paul is describing the condition of a person whose desires have changed, a person who *wants* to do the right thing—but still isn't *able* to do what is right. So, grace must not stop with just changing our sinful desires. To truly solve the problem, grace must also *enable* us to do right.

Putting this all together, we find that "grace" is *both* the *desire*, and the *power* to do what is right. There is no place for fights and quarrels in God's kingdom of peace and harmony. God wants us to be a part of His kingdom, Jesus' death on the cross is abundant evidence of that. But if we are to be a part of His kingdom, we must not only *want* to do what is right, we must also *be able* to do right. Therefore, it is because of His mercy and feelings of favorableness toward us that God gives us His grace.

No wonder so many of the New Testament books begin, or end, with phrases like, "grace be unto you." May we be willing to give up the selfish things we desire, and allow God to give us His grace.

"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."
James 4:6, 10

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"Sin, that cost Adam beautiful Eden, exists everywhere in our world. Evil triumphs wherever God is not known or his character contemplated. We could not commit sin if we realized the presence of God, and thought upon his goodness, his love, and his compassion. Satan knows that if he can obscure the vision so that the eye of faith cannot behold God, there will be no barrier against sin. It is necessary to know God in order to be attracted to him. And the perception of his image as represented in Christ changes the sinner's views of evil. The shadow of Satan obscures the character of Jesus and of God; but if we by faith gain a knowledge of God, and hold steadfastly to Jesus, we shall be changed. In Jesus is manifested the character of the Father, and the sight of him attracts. It softens and subdues, and ceases not to transform the character, until Christ is formed within, the hope of glory. The human heart that has learned to behold the character of God may become, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, like a sacred harp, sending forth divine melody."

How to Learn Wilderness Survival on Your Own

Classes and instruction on wilderness survival can be quite helpful. However, even if you are not able to attend these classes you can still learn to live in the wilderness. Jesus has promised the Holy Spirit to teach us “all things,” (see John 14:26). “All things” *can* include how to live in the wilderness—it isn’t called “God’s country” for nothing. All you need is a willingness to learn, and a determination to keep at it. And of course, sense of adventure can also be helpful.

Wilderness survival is all about living with nature. Much of survival living involves gathering and making the things you need from what nature provides. As you set out, keep in mind the things that you need to stay alive, (see side-bar). Be sure to focus on how to provide those things that get used up as you use them, such as: water, certain hygiene items, fire making materials, and food. Remember always to stay safe and healthy—so be sure to find out about things in your area that could be hazardous. Below are ten things you can do to learn wilderness survival on your own.

Survival Priorities 1. Shelter 2. Water 3. Health Concerns 4. Fire 5. Food

1. “The Flow of Nature”

Since wilderness survival is all about nature, anything you can learn about nature will be helpful. Get into nature as often as possible. Find a place where you can go to just sit and observe nature. Go out year around, observing how nature “flows” and changes, not only throughout the day, but also from season to season. Watch how the different animals go about their lives, and how they interact with the rest of nature. Notice how everything in nature “fits” together, and learn to “fit into nature” yourself, becoming a part of what’s happening around you. Doing this will help you to know what to expect from nature, which will give you confidence and minimize your fear. It will also help you to find the things you need more easily, because you will already have a good idea of where to look for them.

2. Explore

If you want, start with simple afternoon outings. Explore nearby natural places that have easy to follow trails. As you go out, practice your wilderness skills, especially direction finding. Learn the different plants in your area and where they grow.

As you become more familiar with nature and competent in it, start exploring off the trail, and do longer trips. When you get your equipment pack together, and you have learned of some suitable nearby places to go, try an overnight pack trip. After you do a few overnight trips to refine your gear list, do some weekend trips. Finally, work up to longer multiple-day trips.

As soon as possible, wean yourself from the “I’ll do it when I get back home” mind-set. At first this may be necessary, as you may have to wait and take care of certain things when you get back home. But work towards figuring out solutions to all of life’s needs in, and from, nature.

3. Nature Field Guides

Invest in some good books on wild edible and useful plants, and the trees that grow in your area. Look through these books both before and after your excursions to see what you can recognize. Learn how to identify edible and useful plants in the field, and then experiment with them. But don't eat any plant you are not absolutely sure of. Observe the changes that these plants make through the seasons so you can find them and make use of them over as long a time range as possible. Also, be sure to get to know which plants to avoid, like stinging nettles, poison ivy and poison oak.

4. "What If We Had to Survive Here, Now?"

As you hike along, mentally go over this question yourself, or sit down and discuss it together with your group. Ask, "What would we do if we had to survive indefinitely with just what we have with us right now?" This can be a very valuable exercise because you can look around and see what resources are in the immediate area. If necessary, assume that all traces of civilization, near and far, have suddenly vanish.

Consider: What could be gathered and made from what is available in the area around you? How would you provide for your need for: Shelter? Water? Sanitation and Hygiene? Fire? Food? Also, be sure to think about what you would expect the weather to do in the next few hours? ... in the next few days? Where would you make your camp? What would you do between now and when it gets dark? What would you do tomorrow? What would you do the next day? Would you stay camped in this same area, or would you move to another location? If you chose to move: Why would you move? Where would you go? What route would you take? What would you take with you from this area? What would you do when you got there?

5. Maps

Pour over maps of your location. Look for trails in natural areas where you can go hiking and explore, then go and check them out. As you look over the maps, also search out remote places. What resources do you think they may have for survival? Think through how you might get to these places, and which route would you take?

6. "Camping" Skills

Many common "camping skills" such as: how to find your way, wearing proper clothing, using good sanitation practices, fire safety, fire-building, campfire cooking, knife sharpening, knife safety, wood carving, and knot tying are also wilderness survival skills. Get a good book on camping skills so you can learn these things too.

7. Primitive Skills

Invest in some good books and videos on primitive skills and learn as much as you can from them. When you go on outings, gather natural materials and practice making things. Be sure to practice your "Caretaker Attitude" as you gather. Choose a nice spot to sit and work on your project while you keep your eye out for what's happening in nature around you. You may also want to take some natural materials home to "play" with. You can actually learn a lot at home, just limit yourself to doing

only what would be possible to do away from civilization, in a wilderness pack trip setting —such as not using power tools.

Another good resource for primitive skills and useful plants information is historical sites and visitor centers at state and national parks. Whenever you visit these places check out what they have to offer at their exhibits.

8. Other People

Talk with other similarly minded people, sharing ideas, skills, and places to go. Get together for outings and work on primitive skills craft projects together.

9. Equipment

Get your equipment together, keep it packed and ready to go. This is helpful, not only for those unexpected times when you suddenly realize that you can take off and do a quick trip, but it would also be very valuable in a disaster or emergency.

After each outing review your equipment —at least mentally. Replenish supplies you have used, add items you wish you had taken, and take out things you really didn't need. Strive for simplicity, low bulk and low weight. If not, your pack will quickly grow so big you that you will end up not taking it along with you —and then you won't have what you *do* need when you really need it. Look for items that have multiple uses. But don't waste your time or money on “survival gadgets.” Research what other people living and traveling in nature have carried, such as various native peoples around the world and the early American frontiersmen.

10. Experience

As the saying goes, “experience is the best teacher.” As important as skills and equipment are, your collective experience in and with nature will be your most valuable asset. It is your collective experience that will enable you to bring all the different pieces of the survival “puzzle” together.

As you experience nature you will learn what you can expect from it, and what you can do with it. As you experience God working in and through you while you are out in nature, you will know how He can both guide you and provide for you, (see Psalm 32:8 and Phillipians 4:19). This experience will give you the wisdom, courage and faith to know what you need to do, and to keep you going through to the end. But you can not get this type of experience by just reading, thinking or talking about it. You simply must get out and do it!

This is basically the way I have learned what I know today. Of course I've picked up many different ideas and skills from a lot of different people. Some difficult yet invaluable skills, such as making fire with a bow-drill, I have learned from books and hard earned experience. Others, such a making cordage and flint knapping, I still might not know if I had been left to myself. However, other than the Holy Spirit, (see John 14:26) I have never had a particular teacher or mentor to guide my learning. You can learn this way too.