

UNLIMITED

NEWSLETTER

UNLIMITED GRACE

I love the Lord because he hears my voice... Because he bends down to listen (Psalm 116:1-2, NLT).

God doesn't wait for you to reach him.

He bends down to reach you.

The Bible was written in a polytheistic culture: a culture which believed that there were many gods. That's why the writers of the Bible emphasise over and over again that the true God is better than all the others. They affirm that the true God is more powerful, more just, more righteous, and that he is more loving, kind and merciful. But there is one theme in the Bible that sets apart the true God from all the "pretenders". It's expressed in our text above.

This idea of God "bending down" was completely unknown in all ancient cultures. Today, it is still what distinguishes the true God from all other gods, who were remote and did not come down to associate with humanity. The notable exception was Greek mythology, where the gods sometimes came down to deal with humans, but it was either to seduce pretty girls or to play cruel practical jokes. That is hardly comparable to the true God who bends down in mercy!

At the core of Christianity is the idea that God has come down to us, not for any other purpose than that he just loves being with us, because he just ... loves us! God doesn't wait for you to reach him. He bends down to reach you.

All of the Old Testament pointed to the coming of God to be with his people. The gospel writer Matthew was very clear about God's presence in this world in the person of Jesus Christ:

...they will call him Immanuel (which means "God with us") (Matt 1:23, NIV.)

Jesus was born in a stable, lived as a homeless man, associated with the rejected and the outcasts of society, and was executed as the lowest of criminals. Through his incarnation, God scraped the bottom of the barrel of human experience. Having done that, God could have said, "I've been there, done that. Now let's wipe our hands of this mess and move on." But no! He promises to be with you always! (Matthew 28:20).

This means that regardless of the situation in which you find yourself, God is able to reach you. Even if you think you've hit your lowest point, if you accept him as your friend, he will be there for you. God doesn't wait for you to reach him. He bends down to reach you.

Being all-powerful and glorious is fine. But God bends down. And that's the greatest reason to worship that we could ever have.

▼ ELIEZER GONZALEZ

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GRACE AND PEACE

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:3, NIV).

Notice what the apostle Paul says: "Grace and peace to you." Twenty times these two ideas are joined in Scripture, and never in the reverse order.

Many people want peace but no grace. They want happiness but not holiness. But this is the only order for true peace. It must be preceded by grace. Grace is God's undeserved active love to the unlovely, God's infinite mercy to the merciless, God's outpouring of goodness to those who could never deserve it. So grace always precedes peace.

And we are lost until grace finds us. We are naked until grace clothes us. We are undone until grace saves us. We are miserable until grace comforts us.

So grace is just a name for God's active undeserved love, poured out like an infinite ocean. We bring our little cup of faith and it is filled to overflowing, and then we find that from the cup springs up a fountain of life, giving us everything we need.

Grace and peace –
always in that order.
Before conversion
we long for grace



God gives us
grace and peace,
but always in that
order.

but we can't think it would bring us peace; maybe forgiveness, but no peace. But it always brings peace.

If God has taken away our guilt, if God can forgive us, we must learn to forgive ourselves. Some of us are so self-righteous that we find it a difficult task, but if God can forgive our sins we must forgive ourselves.

Grace and peace: peace with God, peace with our own hearts and peace with other people. You can get on with other people if you accept them. You can get on with other people if you love them. You can get on with other people if you have made the resolution you will leave them free, never try to force them.

There was once a great king who had beautiful gardens, and who would go away from his kingdom certain months of the year. And he said to his gardener, "Let all the people come in who want to come in."

One day when the king came back to the garden, the gardener complained that the people were picking the flowers. "Oh," said the king, "My subjects love flowers? Plant more."

Now, that is grace. God is always giving us more: more beauty, more love, and more truth. God gives us grace and peace, but always in that order.

▼ **DES FORD**

LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS GOOD NEWS from AFRICA

A Ministry of Hope for Kenya's Prisons "There are few places darker than a prison cell", writes GNU's Pr Bonifresh. But, in Nanyuki G.K. Prison, God has used GNU's prison chaplain, George Ngatia, to shine a light for prisoners without hope.

Using Bibles donated by GNU, he is sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, offering salvation and true transformation. Now, a group of prisoners meets regularly for prayer, Bible study and worship.

One such prisoner is John, a Christian who lost his way and is doing time in prison for his mistakes. He has found his way back to God, thanks to the ministry of GNU. His ambition is now to help people like him come home to Jesus Christ:

"I want to begin a prison ministry when I am released. I understand what it's like to lose God, and I want to make a difference to the lives of other prisoners."

Sharing the Gospel at Christmas Recently, the Kenyan Government initiated some prison reforms designed to give



Blessed by GNU's gospel meetings and Christ-centred books

prison ministries an opportunity to help rehabilitate prisoners. GNU is playing an active role in this ministry. At Christmas, GNU was invited to provide a preacher and a choir for Christmas services. We asked a local church youth choir to sing, and GNU's Pastor Bonifresh's sermon, entitled "Coming Home", was based on Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son.

Twenty-four People Baptised What joy in Busogo, Kenya, as 24 people were baptised into God's family in late 2017. These were people who had come to understand the joy of the Good News through the ministry of GNU at Gospel meetings held a couple of months earlier.



The group included youths as young as 15, who now look forward to a life of service to the Gospel of Jesus.

They heard the Gospel from Next Door We know the story in the Gospels about the man who stood in the shadows, and begged God to be merciful to him. In Kibera, Kenya, during GNU's ten-day evangelistic programme, a family of four living next door to the church, listened to the Gospel preaching from the shadows of their home. Gradually, they became more and more absorbed in the message of God's love.

It was when they heard the story of the woman who was healed as she touched the hem of Jesus' robe, that they felt inspired to declare their new-found faith and joy in Jesus. They are now rejoicing in the Gospel, grateful that God reached out to them next door.

THEY ARE DEPENDING ON YOU

How can we ignore the multitudes, like Solomon and Saeed, who depend on us to hear the message of hope in Jesus?

I'd like you to meet Solomon. He went from being a promising university student in Uganda to a life that was completely out of control. He fell in with a bad crowd and turned to alcohol and drugs. Solomon felt that there was no way out for him, and that he was a failure in everything he attempted. So he gave up on God.

Solomon even tried to sell his Bible in order to pay for alcohol. He planned to end his life after the money had run out. But in the photo on the right you see him beaming and holding his Bible high. Solomon says, "I tried to sell my Bible but God had other ideas!"

What was it that turned Solomon's life around? Pastor Bonifresh tells us that as a result of GNU's ministry, Solomon decided to give his life to Christ, and he asked to be baptised.

This isn't the end of the journey. Solomon says: "I want to begin a new life. Please pray for me, because it hasn't been easy."

There are millions of people all over Africa, like Solomon, who need to discover the power of Jesus in their lives. I receive requests for prayer and help from Africa every single day.

GNU has recently stopped broadcasting on Radio East Africa (shortwave) and right now we are looking for a new FM station in Kenya or Uganda, so that we can reach more people, especially in the large urban centres.

GNU needs \$900 every month in order to keep our ministry in Africa active and sharing the Good News of Jesus. This includes the cost of broadcasting on a new radio station.

More than that, GNU needs \$40,000 in order for its ministry to continue for the next two months until you receive our next newsletter. That's why our target for this appeal is \$40,000, with a special focus on Africa.



"I tried to sell my Bible, but God had other ideas"
— Solomon

Just on 31 January I received this message from Africa. In it, Saeed shared what God has done for him through GNU, as a result of your faithfulness:

I greet you in in the most wonderful name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For me, being a born Muslim, converting to Christianity and becoming a born-again Christian has not been an easy path, but it is a path worth taking. Never did I think that I would feel this much joy. I have been mocked, yes, and I have been persecuted, but through it all I still remain in Christ as I want to live for Him. Today I can say I am not where I need to be, but I can thank God I am not where I used to be. All praise to Him. – Saeed.

Can you ignore the multitudes like Solomon and Saeed, who depend on you, through us, to hear the message of hope in Jesus?

To keep sharing the Gospel on the air and on the ground in East Africa, please complete the reply slip below and mail it back to us in the envelope provided.

Grace and peace in Jesus

Eliezer Gonzalez *Senior Pastor, Good News Unlimited*



my gift to do the work of Jesus

Eliezer, I want to give a gift to help spread the Word fast in Africa and elsewhere, to help people like Solomon, Saeed and Julia find hope and life in Jesus!

Please click on this link to donate online

Alternatively, please follow the instructions on the next page to donate by mail.



Solomon (L) after his baptism, with Pastor Bonifresh (R)



I like to feel my \$\$ are making a difference to people's lives, so the stories are wonderful, sort of like the Book of Acts is still taking place.

■ Tom, USA

FROM ELI'S DESK

Dear Friend

I often ask myself the question, "Do I have faith?" The reason is that I often don't *feel* as if I'm full of faith. By nature, I'm not fundamentally an optimistic person. I'm often prone to fear and anxiety. I know that's not what the leader of a Gospel ministry should be saying. Some might think I should be projecting unshakable confidence, beaming with a perfect smile as I show off the material blessings God has given me. Isn't that what evangelists do?

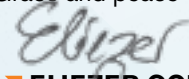
But I'm not that kind of evangelist. Perhaps it's better simply to be honest. I worry about my family. I worry about GNU. Making ends meet in order to keep doing what needs to be done isn't always easy. I've spent sleepless nights worrying about the ministry God has given me. More than once, my wife has asked me, "Don't you have any faith?"

Perhaps faith **isn't** being unaffected by the anxieties and worries that are common to all of us. Perhaps when Jesus said, "Do not worry" (Matthew 6:34), he was encouraging us through the anxious times, because he knew that we *would* worry. So maybe faith is trusting God despite your feelings. Like someone once said, "Feel the fear and do it anyway." When I look at the stories of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 and elsewhere, I don't find perfect faith, but decisions and actions that showed trust in God in spite of fear. Think of people like Elijah and John the Baptist.

I've staked my life on the Gospel, and I'm not turning back. Yes, I worry and stress. But often, when I've cried out to him, God has filled me with an indescribable peace and joy, and he's set me back on the right track.

What about you? Do you have faith? Are you making the decisions in your life that put Jesus and his Good News first? If so, then despite your feelings, you are a giant of faith in the eyes of Heaven!

Grace and peace



▼ **ELIEZER GONZALEZ** Senior Pastor, Good News Unlimited



▼ JULIA'S STORY: "GOD IS EVERYTHING"

Julia knew the nightmare of sexual abuse at a very young age and turned to alcohol and drugs in a vain attempt to cope. In the Soviet Ukraine, God was a cross between a capitalist invention and a kindly old man, and he was nowhere to be found when she was suffering.

Later, Orthodox religion became fashionable, and she went to a monastery for help. At the monastery, her group read the Bible and talked a great deal, but they still spent most of their time under the influence of drugs. One by one her friends died, and she was left infected with HIV. She married, and became pregnant. But life continued its downward spiral. The baby died. A close friend died of a drug overdose.

Julia takes up her story: "I imagined myself in a boat without any aim or destination. I remember crying out to Heaven: *Lord, I am going in a boat on the sea*



without any knowledge of my destination. Lead it and wash it ashore. I have no strength.

"My husband finally threw me out. It was actually a blessing, for we had a bad life together. Then I went to get help for my drug addiction at the hospital.

"I began attending Gospel meetings led by the GNU pastor. For the first time in my life I was able to study the Bible in peace, together with other people, and I was able to understand many things. I've realised now that God has been with me and loving me all my life, even during the difficult times.

"Now, for the first time, I have a few real friends. God reveals Himself in my life through people who share his love with me. Now I am confident that everything will turn out well. I can really say that now God is everything to me — He leads and gives me strength."



My gift to help spread the Word of the Gospel Fast

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