

Title:           **“BY THE GRACE OF GOD  
I AM WHAT AM”**

Text:           1 Corinthians 15:10

Subject:       *Salvation by Grace*

Date:           Tuesday Evening — April 27, 2010

Tape:           #Z-85b

Readings:    *Lindsay Campbell and Allen Kibby*

Introduction:

Let's begin in 1 Corinthians 15:1. I will be working my way down to my text and my subject.

## **ONE GOSPEL**

v. 1 — **“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand.”**

- There is but one Gospel — “*The Gospel!*” — “*The of the Kingdom,*” — “*The Gospel of Christ,*” — “*The Gospel of God,*” — “*The Gospel of Peace,*” — “*The Gospel of the Grace of God.*”
- The Gospel is that which I preach unto you. — I have nothing else to preach.
- It is the Gospel that every saved sinner, we and all who are our “*brethren*” in Christ, has received.
- It is the Gospel wherein we stand in the grace of God, having access to him, redeemed, justified, sanctified, accepted and kept in Christ.

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v. 2 — **“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.”**

- It is the Gospel by which we are saved.
- We are saved by the Gospel if, and only if, we continue in the Gospel.
- If you do not continue in the Gospel, your faith is but a vain, empty, meaningless profession.

v. 3 — **“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”**

**The Gospel is a Person.** We preach a person — Christ! The preaching of the Gospel is the preaching of Jesus Christ the Lord and him crucified.

**HOW**

Now watch this little word “*how*.” I am fully aware that that little word was added by our translators. There is no actual corollary word for “*how*” in the Greek text. But it was added for a reason, a very good reason. — In translating from one language to another it is often necessary to add a word to give the proper sense of the original. In this case, not only is the added word needful, it

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is absolutely necessary. In fact, as 1 Corinthians 15:3 reads in our English translation, this added word is the key to the text.

**The preaching of the gospel is not just declaring the fact that Christ died for our sins**<sup>1</sup>, but “*how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*” So, this is the question that must be answered, the issue that must be addressed in the preaching of the Gospel. — **How did the Lord Jesus Christ die for our sins, according to the Scriptures?**

1. Christ died for our sins **according to the Old Testament Scriptures** (Paul is here referring to the Old Testament.)...

- As a sin-atonement sacrifice.
- By Divine Appointment — Time — Place — The Manner of Execution.
- For the satisfaction of divine justice, that God might be just and the Justifier of his people, — “*a just God and a Savior!*”
- As a Substitutionary Sacrifice.
- As a Scapegoat Sacrifice!

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<sup>1</sup> If that were the case, then it must be admitted that Russellites, Campbellites, Papists, Liberals, Pentecostals and even Mohammedans preach the Gospel.

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- As an Effectual Sacrifice, giving access to and acceptance with the Holy Lord God.
- As that Sacrifice Propheted and Typified in all the Old Testament Scriptures — The First Sacrifice — Abel’s Sacrifice — Noah’s Ark — Genesis 3:15 — Psalm 22:1-31 — Isaiah 53 — Daniel 9:24-27.

v. 4 — **“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”**

2. Once he had died for our sins according to the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus Christ was “*buried*” according to the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures (Psalms 16:10; Isaiah 53:9-12).

**Illustration:** — *Jonah!*

3. Then, he “*rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*” (Psalms 2:7; 16:10; 68:18; 110:1, 7; Isaiah 26:19; 53:10-12; Hosea 6:2; Romans 4:25-5:11).

(Psalms 2:7) “I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

(Psalms 16:10) “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see

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corruption.”

(Psalms 68:18) “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them*.”

(Psalms 110:1) “A Psalm of David. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

(Psalms 110:7) “He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.”

(Isaiah 26:19) “Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew *is as* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

(Isaiah 53:10-12) “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. (11) He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. (12) Therefore will I

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divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

(Hosea 6:2) “After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.”

(Romans 4:25) “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

(Romans 5:1-11) “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; (4) And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (5) And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (6) For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God

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commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (10) For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (11) And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.”

**In verses 5-9, Paul tells us that the resurrection of Christ is an indisputable fact of history.**

vv. 5-9 — “And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”

Now, look at verse 10. Here’s my text and my subject — **“BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM.”** Paul says, I am not fit to be an apostle. I am the least of all the apostles. I persecuted the church. Yet, here I am — an

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apostle of Christ. I am not an apostle because I chose to be an apostle, because I earned the right to be an apostle, or because I deserve to be an apostle! Oh, no! A thousand times no! — *“But by the grace of God I am what I am!”*

**Proposition:** What Paul here declares of himself as a sinner saved by the grace of God, every saved sinner gladly and constantly acknowledges — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*

The Apostle **Paul knew nothing of human merit.** He knew that he did not even deserve to be considered by God. He had been before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious. — *“But”, he wrote, “I obtained mercy...and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant.”*

For this saved sinner, there was no creed or confession of faith more suitable to his own experience than this — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”* And it is equally appropriate to every sinner who has experienced the free, sovereign, saving grace of God in Christ. **As believers, all saved sinners gladly ascribe the entire work of salvation to the free grace of God in Christ, “to the praise of his glory.”** We rejoice to sing, with old Newton...

“Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me.



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I once was lost, but now am found.

‘Twas blind, but now I see!”

## **MY DOCTRINE**

This is my doctrinal confession. — “*By the grace of God I am what I am.*” If you are saved, you do not owe your salvation to anything you have done; and you know it. And for those of you who are not converted, if ever you are to be saved, it will not be because of any goodness in you. We must deny our own merits, or we cannot have the merits of Christ. The source of God’s goodness to us lies altogether in his sovereign mercy. Everything in salvation was accomplished for us and in us by Christ alone. He chose us, redeemed us, justified us and called us. And it is Christ alone who preserves us unto eternal glory. — If any sinner is lost and goes to hell, it will be his own fault. You will have no one to blame but yourself. But if anyone is saved, it will be by the grace of God and the work of God alone. We will have no one to praise but him!

**First, let me tell you what I am, not what I am by nature, but what I am in Christ.**

- A Believing Sinner
- A Forgiven Sinner
- A Son of God
- A Saint — A Sanctified, Righteous Man

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I am a sinner by birth, by nature, by habit and by practice. Yet, “the God of all grace” (What a blessed name for our God. — He is “THE GOD OF ALL GRACE!” — 1 Peter 5:10) — “The God of all grace” declares that I am a saint, a righteous, sanctified, holy man. In fact, if you will read the New Testament carefully, you will find that neither the Lord God himself, nor the Lord Jesus Christ our Mediator, nor any of the inspired writers ever speak of believing men and women in any way except as saints, never as sinners. — Though I know, and confess myself to be a sinner, God reckons me a perfectly righteous saint, and tells me to reckon as he reckons (Romans 6:11).

(Romans 6:11) “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

**If God reckons me righteous, I reckon he’s right. I am a perfectly righteous, holy man in Christ, accepted and blessed in him as such.**

- **By Divine Decree** (2 Samuel 23:5; Romans 8:28-31; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 Timothy 1:9-10; Jude 1:1).

(2 Samuel 23:5) “Although my house *be* not so with

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God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is* all my salvation, and all *my* desire, although he make *it* not to grow.”

(Romans 8:28-31) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (31) What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?”

(Ephesians 1:3-6) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

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(2 Timothy 1:9-10) “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

(Jude 1:1) “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, *and* called.”

- **By Divine Imputation**, through the finished work of Christ (Romans 3:21-26; 4:25-5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21)

(Romans 3:21-26) “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; (22) Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: (23) For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; (24) Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (25) Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of

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sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (26) To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

(Romans 4:25) “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

(Romans 5:1) “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:”

(2 Corinthians 5:21) “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

- **By Divine Gift** — I stand before you as a man made righteous by the gift of God’s free and sovereign grace in the new birth, imparting the righteousness of Christ to me and giving faith in him, which is the perfecting of holiness (2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:1-9).

(2 Corinthians 7:1) “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

**The perfecting of holiness is faith in Christ**, faith by

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which we purify and “*cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit,*” forsaking all freewill/works religion, trusting Christ alone as our righteousness (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Acts 15:9).

(2 Peter 1:4) “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

(1 John 3:1-9) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (3) And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. (4) Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (5) And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (6) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (7) Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (8) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil

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sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

## **MODERN GNOSTICS**

Let me digress a little. Let me say something more about the righteousness of Christ being imparted to us. There are a few brilliant fools today, claiming to preach the gospel, who deny the new birth, who deny that the believer receives a new nature by God’s mighty operations of grace. They claim to have “new light.” But their new light is the old darkness of pagan Gnosticism.

(Colossians 2:8) “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

Gnosticism is the teaching that salvation is arrived at by acquired knowledge, not by divine regeneration. This philosophy of vain deceit denies the necessity of the new birth, denies that the believer is given a new nature by the Spirit of God, denies that righteousness is imparted and that we are made partakers of the divine nature in regeneration.

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Gnostics speak of God’s saving grace as nothing but a “principle” (an accepted philosophical rule).

Gnosticism is a dead corpse that has been around for a long time. The early church was plagued with the heresy; and the church today is still plagued with it. Gnostics vainly imagine that they are the spiritually elite, that they were the only ones who have true, saving knowledge. They look upon those of us who believe God’s revelation of himself in his Word and trust Christ as our Wisdom as well as our Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption as ignorant people, without spiritual understanding. In essence, Gnostics are people who, as Paul puts it, who know “*Christ after the flesh,*” by mere carnal reason, which is to say they are people with religious knowledge who are totally void of grace and spiritual life, groping in darkness.

Salvation, the new birth, is not a new principle in you, but a new nature in you, “*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*”

- A Blessed Man (Deuteronomy 28:1-24 — The Head, not the Tail of My Enemies!)
- An Heir of God — And Worthy to Be An Heir (Colossians 1:12)
- A Stranger and Pilgrim
- A Man at Rest



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- A New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17) — Complete in Christ!

(2 Corinthians 5:17) “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

- A Perfect and Upright Man (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). — **“Behold,”** said Bildad the Shuhite, **“God will not cast away a perfect man!”** (Job 8:20).

With His spotless garments on,  
I am as holy as God’s Son!

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So near, so very near to God,  
Nearer I cannot be;  
For in the person of his Son  
I am as near as he.

So dear, so very dear to God,  
Dearer I cannot be;  
The love God has for His dear Son —  
Such is his love to me!

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**That is what I am; “but by the grace of God I am what I am.”** — I am not what I am by my works, or by my will, or by my worth. — *“But by the grace of God I am what I am.”*

- Sovereign, Electing Grace
- Eternal, Covenant Grace
- Redeeming, Satisfying Grace
- Protecting, Prevenient Grace
- Effectual, Saving Grace
- Immutable, Indestructible Grace

**MY EXPERIENCE**

As this is my doctrinal confession this is my constant experience. — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”* — Being made to know something of the depravity of my own heart, I must with weeping eyes testify that I am what I am by the grace of God.

1. **Knowing what I am by nature**, what I was and where I was when the Lord God stopped me in my mad rush to hell, I am constantly made to acknowledge and confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*
2. **In my daily struggles**, when I feel the power of lusts within and temptations from without, I am compelled to confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*

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3. **When preserved in the midst of great temptations** to which my flesh is so naturally inclined, I am compelled to confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*
4. **When I am kept in the midst of trials** by which I have seen many others overcome, I have to confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*
5. **When I see others** whom I esteem highly for their profession fall and turn from the faith, I am compelled to confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*
6. **When I have been privileged to experience a little reviving in my soul after a time of horrid declension,** I am constrained to confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*
7. **When I have been restored to fellowship with Christ** after a fall, I have to confess — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*
8. **When I am made to rejoice in the fulness of God’s blessings in Christ,** I rejoice to say — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*

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9. **When at last I stand with Christ in Glory**, I will confess with joy unspeakable — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*

## **MY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This is my grateful acknowledgement. — *“By the grace of God I am what I am.”*

(1 Corinthians 4:7) “For who maketh thee to differ *from another?* and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it?*”

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11) “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, (10) Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

**We realize that the only distinction between us and all other men is the distinguishing grace of God.** As you

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read the black catalogue of human sin, do not forget these words, — “*And such were some of you.*” But now, by the grace of God, we are washed, justified and sanctified. Realizing what we were and knowing something about what God has done for us in Christ, we rejoice to say, — “*By the grace of God I am what I am.*”

Now, look at our text again.

“But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which *was bestowed* upon me was not in vain.”

- This grace was bestowed upon me! I am a brand plucked out of the fire!

**Illustration:** — *Grace Grabs*

- This grace bestowed upon me was not in vain, because here I am!

(1 Corinthians 1:26-31) “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called:* (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things

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which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence. (30) But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

- This grace bestowed upon me was not in vain, because there you are!
- This grace bestowed upon me was not in vain, because my God shall be glorified by it!

(Ephesians 2:1-7) “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (6) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places*

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in Christ Jesus: (7) That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

**Application:** “*By the grace of God I am what I am!*” — Is this your testimony? Is this what you have experienced? Is this what you are experiencing?

1. If it is true that “*by the grace of God that I am what I am,*” then **I have every reason to walk before God in the full assurance of faith.**

This is not a matter of feeling, but of faith. My feelings and emotions can never rise above the source from whence they come; and that source is me. But faith has to do with God and his eternal Word. Faith is a living link connecting the heart that has it with God who gives it. My feelings and emotions, no matter how intense and real, can never connect my soul with God. They are neither divine nor eternal, but are human and fleeting. They are like Jonah’s gourd, which sprang up in a night and perished in a night. Not so faith! Feelings are occupied with self. Faith is occupied with Christ. Feelings look inward. Faith looks outward. Feelings leave my soul in doubt. Faith leads me into peace. Feelings have to do with my fickle, fluctuating condition. Faith has to do with Christ’s enduring sacrifice and God’s Revealed Truth.

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2. If it is true that “*by the grace of God I am what I am,*” **what a truly humble man I ought to be!**
3. If it is true that “*by the grace of God I am what I am,*” **I ought to be most charitable with my brethren and even with my most implacable enemies.**
4. If it is true that “*by the grace of God I am what I am,*” **how thankful I ought to be!**
5. If it is true that “*by the grace of God I am what I am,*” **what a devoted, consecrated man I ought to be!**
6. If it is true that “*by the grace of God I am what I am,*” then **I have every reason to be hopeful for you!**
7. Because it is true that “*by the grace of God I am what I am,*” **I preach the gospel to you with great joy and call on you now to come to Christ.** What God has done for me, he can do for you!

Amen.