

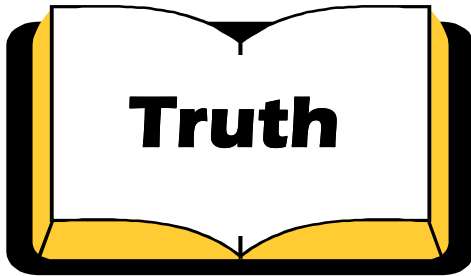
**Stepping**



**Stones**



**to**



**By Charles W. Wages**

# **STEPPING STONES TO TRUTH**

*A Dispensational Approach*

**by Charles W. Wages**



1450 Oak Hill Road  
Fort Worth, Texas 76112-3017

*Speaking the Truth in Love*

Copyright © 2004 by Grace Bible Church of Fort Worth, Inc. All rights reserved.

This book may not be sold or offered for sale without the written permission of Grace Bible Church of Fort Worth, Inc.

Portions of this book may be duplicated for use in any educational setting, however, the book, as a whole, may not be duplicated in any form without the written permission of Grace Bible Church of Fort Worth, Inc.

## THE STEP OF FAITH

It is interesting and instructive that our English word “faith” is only used twice as a noun in the Old Testament! The words *faithful*, *faithfully*, and even *faithless* are used to describe or to tell how Israel reacted to God, but Deuteronomy 32:20 and Habakkuk 2:4 are the only ones that point out a fact. The first tells of Israel’s lack of faith to a faithful God. This is especially remarkable in view of what God had done for them and that He is a God of Truth.

*“He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” (Deuteronomy 32.4)*

In the same line of thought, He says in Moses’ song,

*“I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.” (Deuteronomy. 32:20)*

So the first use of the noun *faith* is in a negative sense — “children in whom is no faith.” The second use in Habakkuk 2:4 reads,

*“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.”*

Williams, in his *Student’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* writes:

“In verse 4 the righteous man and the unrighteous man are contrasted. As to the unrighteous, either Israelite or Chaldean, his soul was lifted up and not upright in him, and his doom should be death. As to the righteous, his soul was humbled, for he lived by faith and should enjoy everlasting life. The one was self-relying, the other self-

renouncing.”

This expression, “the just shall live by his faith,” is used three other times in the Word of God, all in the writings of the apostle Paul. There is a giant step of faith from the Old Testament passage to the ones in Paul’s writings. The passage in Galatians 3:11 is especially revealing.

*“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, the just shall live by faith.”*

Also, in Romans 1:17 we read,

*“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”*

The expression, “from faith to faith,” is especially helpful in understanding progressive revelation of Truth, but also in making progress in our walk for God. This results in real progress in faith. How? Consider four dimensions of progress in faith.

- Israel in the Old Testament and under the law to New Testament truth.
- From a lower to higher degree of faith in God.
- From past truth to present truth to future truth.
- From His faith (subjective) to our faith (objective).

A believer in Christ can really take a step forward in his or her personal faith by considering Abraham. That great step of faith he took in obeying God, even to offering his only son Isaac, is encouraging to those of us who have a few small trials or tests. This account of Abraham is found in Genesis, chapter 22. We learn in Romans, chapter 4, that we can walk in “the steps of that faith.” Not in going through or performing every act of Abraham, but by exhibiting our trust and dependence upon the God of glory. We must keep in mind that Abraham’s offering of his son, Isaac, only pictured or typified the once for all sacrifice of God’s Son on Cal-

vary. God had faith in the perfect obedience of His only begotten Son. The Son had implicit faith in His heavenly Father. This is the basis of all faith. This allows us to have complete confidence in the finished and completed work of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. This, also, allows us to look away from self to the Saviour. It allows us to act by faith on those things God says are real for today. In accepting the faith of Christ, we do away with:

- Self deceit in thinking or believing we are sinlessly perfect in the flesh or that sin is not real.
- Self deception in thinking and believing we can save ourselves by “our own way.”

We have to remember that the Scripture says,

*“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12)*

Also, in Proverbs 12:15,

*“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkens unto counsel is wise.”*

As we step from one dispensation to another in the studying of God’s Word, our faith in His Word should be strengthened. As we advance on understanding how God has dealt with people in the various ages, it makes us to appreciate God’s great plan and purpose for all His children. The dispensations become “Stepping Stones to Truth” and help us to say, “Let us have faith in the One who always keeps faith with us.”

## **THE STEP FROM LAW TO LOVE AND LIGHT**

*“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans*

8:2)

A giant step is taken in God's Word from the Mosaic law to the grace and truth in Christ Jesus. (John 1:17) However, it should be understood that the law given by God to Moses did not end or culminate with the coming of Christ. The scripture teaches,

*“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” (Romans 15:8)*

We learn from this and other scriptures that Christ's earthly ministry was principally to the Jews and in order to confirm promises made unto the Jewish fathers beginning with Abraham. Also, we learn from Matthew 10:5-6 that He instructed His disciples to “go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” In addition, we find the Jews continued practicing the law during the period covered by the book of Acts.

The law of Moses was the result of the “law of sin and death.” The “law of sin and death” was the result of Adam's sin. Romans 5:12 says,

*“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

God in His great divine plan for the ages, sent His only Son into the world to fulfill or completely live the law and die for the sin of the whole world! What good news! What great love! This allows the apostle Paul to state emphatically,

*“Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”*

Of course, we must understand that this love is first and foremost the love of God manifested at Calvary. This was the means

of “fulfilling” the law of sin and death and the law of Moses. A great step was taken. It was now fully shown, not what man needed to do, but what God had done through Christ.

Now in this “dispensation of the grace of God,” we who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ should show forth the love of God, holding forth the light of His Word. In other words, step into the full light of His wonderful “law of love.” John, chapter 15 should be read in view of God’s law of love. We are told to,

- Continue in His love (vs. 9)
- To let joy remain in us (vs. 11)
- Evidence love by keeping His commandments (Word) (vs. 14)

Further, we are to walk (take steps) in love. The gentle admonition, in Ephesians, 5:1-2 is so appropriate, now.

*“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”*

These verses instruct us plainly “how” to walk—in love. They tell us “who” makes it possible—Christ. The basis for our walk in love is that God loved us first.

*“We love him, because he first loved us.” (I John 4:19)*

God doesn’t just love us because we respond and receive His love, but I John 4:10 states,

*“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”*

And then we read in Romans 5:8,

*“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while*



*we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

In Ephesians 5:8-10, we are told to “walk as children of light.” Not just to walk in the light, as we are told in I John 1:5-7, but to walk “as” children of light. The emphasis here is on the walk or the steps we take in our life. We were once darkness, but now we are light and cannot become darkness again. However, it is possible for an enlightened believer to “walk” in darkness, therefore we are admonished to “walk as children of light.” Romans 13:11-14 should be read in connection with this truth.

Dispensationally, we are not under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14-15). It is tragic how many people still labor religiously under their interpretation of “the law” given to Israel. Many who have seen their freedom in Christ, persist in trying to live the law or at least parts of the commandments, judgments, and ordinances given to Israel, but not to the Church, the Body of Christ. Until, the “step into the grace” of God is taken, we will be stopped in our tracks by not “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15).

## **THE STEP TO GRACE**

Dispensationally, spiritually, and in actuality, we, as members of the Body of Christ, are “not under law but under grace:”

*“For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.” (Romans 6:14-15)*

But what is meant by the repeated expression, “we are not under the law, but under grace?” The word “grace” is first found in Genesis 6:8 when we are told,

*“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”*

Also, the word “grace” is used close to 40 times in the Old Testament, and it is significant that the expression, they “found grace” is used about 27 times. For instance,

- Noah found grace (Genesis 6:8)
- Jacob found grace (Genesis 33:10)
- Joseph found grace (Genesis 39:4)
- Moses found grace (Exodus 33:13)

And Jeremiah tells us,

*“Thus saith the Lord, the people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him rest.”*

God is and has always been gracious. But what about the scripture that says,

*“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)*

This was God’s wonderful way of fully manifesting His grace in the person of His Son. We are told in John 1:16, “And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.” How marvelous to see the grace of God!

### **God’s Great Grace Is In Contrast to Debt**

Debt can be defined and described as, “that which is legally due.” Someone must pay that debt and we are plainly told in Scripture that, “the wages (pay off) of sin is death” (Romans. 6:23). Mankind could never pay such a tremendous and overwhelming debt even by working a lifetime. This led the apostle Paul to write:

*“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt.” (Romans 4:4)*

God's great grace tells us that the debt has been paid in full. Christ has died for our sin! Debt speaks of something not paid. Grace speaks of that debt having been fully paid.

*“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:” (Romans 5:20)*

### **God's Great Grace Is In Contrast to Works**

There is nothing wrong with working unless its purpose and direction is wrong. There are several kind of “works” spoken of in Scripture.

- works of the law (Galatians 3:10, Romans 9:31-32)
- dead works (Hebrews 6:1, 9:14)
- of Babylon (Revelation 18:6)
- of Devil (John 8:41,44)
- of flesh (Galatians 5:17-21)

This puts even more emphasis upon that familiar but most important passage in Ephesians 2:8-9,

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

The “works of the flesh” can really be seen in the passage of Galatians 5:17-21. Everyone in the world should read this. Also, the “works” idea has so pervaded modern religion that one hardly hears the glorious gospel of God's grace proclaimed. What a tragedy! The best man can do leaves him in the worst condition — lost.

*“Free from the law, O happy condition,  
Jesus has died, and there is remission.  
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,  
Grace hath redeemed us once for all.”*

Now a giant step further should be seen, other than just the difference between law and grace; debt and freedom; and works and grace. We must see the “dispensation of the Grace of God” proclaimed by the apostle Paul as a revelation not made to men of other ages. The book of Ephesians, chapter three needs to be read in this regard. This involves God completely breaking down the “middle wall of partition” (Ephesians 2:14) between Jew and Gentile and creating an entirely new entity, the Church, which is the Body of Christ. This great truth was not made known to men of other ages, but was hid in God until revealed to and through the apostle Paul. (Ephesians. 3:5-11, Colossians 1:24-29). What a “step of grace.” Now it can be fully stated that salvation is by grace and grace alone! Also, that when a poor lost sinner trusts the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptizes that one into Christ (I Corinthians 12:13) and adds him or her to the one true church, the Body of Christ. We are now “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10); nothing needs to be added, and nothing to be taken away. He has taken our sins in His own body (II Corinthians 5:21), and we have been made the righteousness of God in Him. Now we are ready to “step into the future” with Him!

## **THE STEP INTO THE FUTURE**

What a step—all the way from earth to heaven! This happens in “the twinkling of an eye;” in a moment of time! It takes “light” one year to travel six trillion miles. That is about 63,000 times the distance from the earth to the sun! God, who created light or brought it into being (Genesis 1:3), and created “the heavens and the earth,” is able to transport his children to Himself in a moment.

Let’s consider this “step into the future” in two ways. First, what happens when a person believes in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour, and secondly what happens to the believer at death or at the coming of the Lord for His Church, the body of Christ.

In one explanation of what God has done for those who have

trusted Christ, we are told,

*“Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:12-14)*

We see that this is a past transaction. That is, He has already (past tense) made us partakers of the saints in light, delivered us from the power of darkness, and already translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son. This took place the moment we trusted the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. How beautiful are the words of the Lord Jesus in John 5:24,

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”*

All of this has already taken place in the life of the believer in Christ! It would take ages and pages to account all that God has already done for His believing children. Suffice it to say, that all that is needed to place us in the glory, in His presence, has already been accomplished by the power of God. The book of Ephesians, chapter two, tells us that we have been

- quickened together with Christ (by grace ye are saved)
- raised up together with Christ
- seated together with Christ
- created in Christ Jesus unto good works

We didn't have the strength to take this giant step. God did it for us through Jesus Christ. As far as salvation is concerned, we can't or shouldn't try to “walk in the steps of Jesus” as the song writer wrote. We couldn't take the first step. All we could do or

should do, is give up and let God, through His power, save us, and prepare us for heaven. So, we are now, as believers, people of the future. As far as our salvation, all has been done for all eternity to come.

However, we are still here on earth in earthly bodies of clay. How can we get to heaven and how long will it take? If it takes light a year to go six trillion miles traveling at tremendous speed, what about our going to heaven? How long did it take God to save us, when we believed in Christ? How long did it take Him to make us new creatures? How long did it take the Holy Spirit to baptize us into the church, which is His body? We can only say, instantaneously, in “the twinkling of an eye.” Faster than sound, faster than light!

Christ in us is our hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27) Christ is our “door” to heaven. Christ is our “step” into glory. Christ is our future. The wonderful verses in Philippians 3:20-21 are both inspiring and instructive,

*“For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”*

As far as our earthly or human life is concerned, we have to say with James:

*“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.” (James 4:14)*

However, we don’t have to rely on our human reasoning or feeling. It is only in God’s Word that we can be sure concerning the future. Though we can’t possibly explain in our own human words, we can believe God when He says through the apostle Paul,

*“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” (II Corinthians 5:8)*

How? Please reread Philippians 3:20-21 along with I Thessalonians 4:13-18. What a future! How wonderful to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to know we have eternal life (I John 5:10-13), and that where He is we shall be also. And, further to know that we shall see Him and be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (I John 3:1-2).