

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
John 1:15-18 | Grace Upon Grace
Sunday August 30, 2026

WELCOME:

Bibles in the back—our gift to you.

My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

For the past month, we have studied John's prologue.

I mentioned last week that the first thirteen verses seem like a divine symphony, and verse fourteen is the crescendo—***The Word became flesh and dwelt/ tabernacled with us!***

The crescendo points us back to the OT Tabernacle and how each item associated with it pointed forward to how and why “the Word became flesh.”

John also taught that the Lord Jesus is full of grace and truth.

Last Week's KEYPOINTS:

- Grace is the undeserved favor of God.
 - Gift
- Truth without grace crushes; grace without truth compromises.
 - Two sides of the same coin
 - Seasoning
- Common grace makes life possible. Saving grace makes eternal life possible.
 - Common: creation, air, family, and friends.
 - Saving: salvation
- Truth describes reality as it is—not reality as I would like it to be.
 - Truth is fact, not opinions
 - Truth is objective, not subjective
- Truth becomes distorted, twisted, and warped when divorced from a relationship with God.

Ultimately, if you don't know God, you'll never know the truth—and truth is found in God's Word.

The Bible is God's means/method/manner to grace and truth.

I closed by asking you to consider how you handle *the truth* part of grace and truth in your spiritual life.

My sermon notes included reflection questions for you to consider—I hope they were beneficial.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we're finishing up John's prologue.

Last week, John told us that Jesus is “full of grace and truth.”

This morning, John continues that theme of grace—to more grace.

He also points us back to the OT Law—because to understand God's grace, we must first understand God's Law.

Law must precede Grace.

By “the Law,” John is referring to God's covenantal instruction given to Israel through Moses, including—but not limited to—the Ten Commandments.

Why is Law and Grace important to you today? Let's find out together!

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

John 1:14—*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 1:15—(*John testified concerning him and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ ”*)

John 1:16—*Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace from his fullness,*

John 1:17—*for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

John 1:18—*No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side—he has revealed him.*

May the Lord bless the reading of His Word.

PRAY:

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; faithful love and truth go before you. (Psalm 89:14)

EXEGESIS:

I mentioned that we were finishing the prologue today, so it’s appropriate to read it to keep everything in context.

John 1:1—*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

John 1:2—*He was with God in the beginning.*

John 1:3—*All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.*

John 1:4—*In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

John 1:5—*That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.*

John 1:6—*There was a man sent from God whose name was John.*

John 1:7—*He came as a witness to testify about the light, so that all might believe through him.*

John 1:8—*He was not the light, but he came to testify about the light.*

John 1:9—*The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.*

John 1:10—*He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.*

John 1:11—*He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.*

John 1:12—*But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,*

John 1:13—*who were born, not of natural descent, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.*

John 1:14—*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John the Apostle has just made an astonishing claim: the eternal Word became flesh.

God who is spirit has chosen to become a man.

Now John calls his first witness back to the stand—John the Baptizer.

John 1:15—(*The Baptizer*) testified concerning him (Jesus) and exclaimed, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’ ”)

Several weeks ago I mentioned that we would see the incredible humility of the Baptizer, and here it is.

John was the divinely appointed forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Earthly kings also had forerunners/ advance messengers/heralds.

These men carried out royal commands and traveled from city to city, letting everyone know that the king was coming.

This advance notice gave the city time to prepare for the king.

The Baptizer’s role was to prepare Israel for their King.

He was prophesied in the OT by the prophets Isaiah and Malachi.

We know his birth was miraculous, but we don’t know anything about his childhood.

Regardless, after 400 years of prophetic silence, the Baptizer shows up in Galilee.

John arrived with the prophetic message: ***“Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!” (Matt. 3:1)***

John’s message wasn’t religious reform, morality, social gospel, or the prosperity gospel.

The Baptizer's message is the same message that we desperately need to hear today—“*Repent! Be Converted/Believe!*”

It's a controversial and convicting message that goes straight to our hearts.

It's a message that no one wants to hear—it's as popular today as it was back then.

If there ever had been a man with unwavering convictions, it was the Baptizer.

The Lord Jesus called him *the greatest man who had lived*.

John is the most underrated man in Scripture, a “prophet's prophet.”

He surpassed Abraham, Moses, and David because of his unique privilege as the divinely ordained forerunner—personally introducing the Lord Jesus Christ to the world.

The OT prophets proclaimed, “The Messiah is coming”—John pointed and said, “There He is.”

John 1:15—“*This was the one of whom I said, ‘*

It's hard to find a more impressive spiritual leader than John the Baptizer.

His greatness was seen most clearly in his willingness to become smaller so that the Lord would be seen as greater.

John 3:30—*He must increase, but I must decrease.*

Every faithful Christian must do the same.

It's one thing to want Jesus to increase and become bigger—but it's another for us to willfully choose to become smaller.

John 1:15—*‘The one coming after me ranks ahead of me, because he existed before me.’*

John’s statement sounds almost like a riddle.

It looks like the Baptizer is clearing up confusion about chronology.

And he wants to clear this up because he knows people are calling him the Messiah.

So let’s talk about divine timing.

Yes, the Lord Jesus was six months younger than John.

Yes, John’s ministry officially started before Jesus’.

But neither is the main point.

The main point is that Jesus had no birth date—His life didn’t begin in Bethlehem.

The Lord Jesus is God; therefore, He is preexistent.

Before He was physically born at Bethlehem, the preincarnate Jesus (Jesus before Christmas)

- walked with Adam and Eve in Eden;
- spoke to Moses from the burning bush;
- revealed Himself to Joshua as a warrior;
- wrestled with Jacob and broke his hip.
- appeared to Job in the whirlwind;
- revealed Himself to Isaiah seated on His throne.

Does all of that blow your mind? That’s the Baptizer’s point!

The Lord Jesus is unique in every aspect of his being—His person, birth, doctrine, works, miracles, death, resurrection, and future coming.

Because Jesus is both God and Man.

Now that John has established who Jesus IS, he tells us what He can give.

John 1:16—*Indeed, we have all received grace...*

Last week we learned that grace was the *undeserved favor* of God.

God's unmerited favor—don't have to work for it, and we certainly don't deserve it — brings blessings and joy.

The Greek noun *charis* (*kha-reece*) refers to grace, favor, or a freely given gift.

It's like hand in glove with God's faithfulness in the OT.

Grace corresponds beautifully with God's covenantal faithfulness.

We see this type of faithful love in the OT as God introduces Himself to Moses.

Exodus 34:6—*The LORD—the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth,*

John not only introduces God as “grace and truth”—now he emphasizes grace.

John 1:16—*Indeed, we have all received grace upon grace...*

“Grace upon grace”—continual grace, inexhaustible grace.

Even where sin abounds, grace abounds more (Romans 5:20)

Ephesians 1:7–8 describes redemption ***“according to the riches of his grace that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding,”***

Ephesians 2:7 speaks of God displaying ***“the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”***

2 Corinthians 9:8 affirms that ***“God is able to make every grace overflow to you, so that in every way, always having everything you need, you may excel in every good work.”***

Grace is God’s faithful love coming to sinners.

And if that wasn’t glorious enough—the grace that saves us is also the grace that sustains us.

We need grace when we’re young—because we’re stupid.

We also need grace when we’re not so young—because our bodies are falling apart.

We need grace in the days of prosperity—to revel in God’s blessings.

We need grace in the days of adversity—to keep us from falling into depression.

The church needs grace in the days of persecution—because we would give up.

We need grace in the days of revival.

In other words, there is never a season of life in which we outgrow our need for grace upon grace.

As God’s grace works in your life, more grace will come, and then more grace, and even more grace!

Think of it as “grace following grace” or “grace heaped upon grace,”

There is a never-ending provision of grace for Believers.

God’s grace is not a single gift, but successive waves of divine favor.

Think of the last time you were at the beach—standing between the beach and the sea—you get your feet wet.

Listen to the sound of the sea and watch these waves roll over your feet.

And just as that wave rolls back into the ocean—another wave is right behind it to take its place.

Maybe as you get used to the water, you step out a little deeper and a wave rolls in—and you step out a little deeper—another wave rolls in.

Then another wave comes, and then another—when do the ocean’s waves stop?

In an infinitely greater way, you cannot stop the divine waves of God’s grace.

As grace fulfills one need— another need arrives—because that’s how life is.

But that wave of grace is already there to meet your next need.

The longer you walk with the Lord—and the more you step out in faith...

Pretty soon you’re swimming in this ocean of God’s grace.

And you don’t even realize that you’re living/walking/swimming ***by faith and not by sight***. (2 Cor. 5:7)

But how can the Lord continue giving grace without ever exhausting His supply?

John gives us the answer in three words: “from His fullness.”

John 1:16—... *from his fullness,*

From whose fullness? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 2:9—For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ.

In the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, you see the fullness of God.

In other words, the Lord Jesus is the divine channel, means—the Person— through which grace flows.

As the embodiment/incarnation of grace and truth, the Lord continuously gives *out of His fullness*.

We all know there's a huge difference between a storage tank and its natural spring.

We've got three ginormous storage tanks of water right across our driveway.

Every time someone in Cottonwood turns on their faucet, those tanks get a little lower.

But an active spring is continually fed from its source.

Jesus is not a spiritual storage tank that loses something every time He provides grace.

He is the living, inexhaustible fountain of grace.

Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well...

John 4:13 NLT— *Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again.*

John 4:14 NLT—*But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again.*

And because the Lord is never depleted of anything, we as Believers are invited to come to Him for everything.

Matthew 11:28—*“Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

Matthew 11:29—*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Matthew 11:30—*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

No circumstance is beyond His ability to provide you grace.

- Where there is brokenness, Jesus makes whole.
- Where there is emptiness, Jesus fulfills.
- Where there is shame, Jesus restores.
- Where there’s suffering, Jesus comforts.
- Where there is hunger, Jesus feeds.
- Where there is darkness, Jesus gives light.
- Where there is death, Jesus gives life.

KEYPOINT 1:

Jesus will provide grace, but not in the way or in the time you think.

Isaiah 55:8—*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not my ways.*

John 1:17—*for the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

First things first, notice the contrast and comparison:

1. Moses with Jesus
2. The law with grace and truth

It's not that Moses, representing the Law, is bad and Jesus, representing grace and truth, is good.

Instead, John points out the stages in God's plan of salvation.

For us to understand God's Law.

The Law revealed God's holy standard, but no one can keep that standard perfectly.

And perfection is the requirement.

And that's the whole purpose of the Law—to show us the impossibility of keeping it.

Grace, on the other hand, is salvation apart from works—because the Lord Jesus did all the work.

Jesus is the only one who could and would fulfill God's Law—all 613 of them!

We can't even keep the top 10—the Ten Commandments.

The Law was a gracious gift, but it was never given as a means to earn salvation.

The Law saves no one.

Romans 3:20 NLT—*For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law shows us how sinful we are.*

Galatians 2:16 NLT— *For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.*

The Law was given on a quaking mountain— Grace and truth were born in a quiet manger.

The Law was written on tablets of stone— Grace and truth are written on hearts of flesh.

When the Law came down from that quaking mountain, three thousand people died (Exodus 32:28).

When the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost, three thousand were saved (Acts 2:41).

The Law kills. Jesus gives life.

The Law identifies the disease, but it can't cure it.

The Law exposes the guilty heart, but it can't replace it.

An X-ray can reveal a broken bone, but the X-ray can't repair the break.

In the same way, God's Law reveals what is broken within us, but it can't heal us.

We don't need rules or a religious system.

We don't need a method or morality.

We need a person—and not just any person—but a person who has come from Heaven.

Romans 8:3 NLT—*The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.*

Romans 10:4 NLT—*For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.*

KEYPOINT 2:

God's Law diagnoses our sin while God's grace provides the cure.

So all of that is to say that John reminds us that God's Law doesn't save—but God's Son can. How?

Not through:

- Praying a sinner's prayer—that's a work
- Raising your hand in a church service—that's a work
- Walking an aisle to receive Jesus into your heart—that's a work too

Romans 10:9—*If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

And there is still so much of God's grace in your belief, because belief requires faith, and faith is another grace from God.

John 1:18—*No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he (Father) has revealed him (Son).*

At first sight, this last verse might seem a bit random.

But in reality, it forms the pinnacle of the entire Prologue.

- It's a bookend to verse one.
- It's the chorus to the song.
- It's the crescendo to the symphony.

The prologue begins and ends on the same theme—*Jesus is God!*

John 1:18—*No one has ever seen God.*

And the reason for that is because God is spirit/invisible.

What John means is that no one has seen God fully and completely—in all of God's glory.

Not even Abraham, “the friend of God,” not even Moses, “whom the lord knew face to face,” could see God in all of His glory.

But now we can, through the person of Jesus Christ.

John 1:18—*The one and only Son, who is himself God...*

“One and only” speaks of the Son's unique relationship with the Father.

He is the eternal Son—begotten, not created—and shares the same divine nature as the Father.

Colossians 1:15—*He is the image of the invisible God,*

This final verse reveals a mystery within the Trinity—the relationship, affection, and closeness the Father has with the Son.

John 1:18—*... and is at the Father's side—*

John ends where he began.

In verse 1, the Word was “with God”—here in verse 18, the Son is at the Father’s side.

To be “at the Father’s side/bosom” describes the Son’s eternal intimacy, love, and fellowship with the Father that we will never comprehend.

John 1:18—*he (Father) has revealed him (Son).*

Your translation may say “explained Him.”

The Lord Jesus is the explanation of God.

He is the answer to the question, “What is God like?”

Jesus doesn’t tell us something about God because Jesus perfectly shows us who God is.

Revealed/Explained comes from a form of the verb from which we get “exegesis.”

“Exegesis” means “to expound/describe/make known.”

Just as a faithful Bible teacher draws out and imperfectly explains the meaning of Scripture— Jesus, on the other hand, perfectly explains the Father.

Not merely through His words, but through His entire person and work.

What John is saying here is that the Lord Jesus is the only one qualified to exegete or reveal the Father to man. Why?

Matthew 11:27— *No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son...*

When was the last time you met someone that you’ve only heard about?

Did your perception change?

That's what Jesus does for us—we don't have to guess who God is.

He tells us exactly who He is.

APPLICATION:

It seems so good to be true—"grace upon grace."

Undeserved and unmerited favor *in and continuously on* our lives.

These spiritual waves of grace that never end.

Wasn't it enough that the Father sent His Son to forgive me?

Now, you're telling me that He wants to give me more??? (Do you know who I am? Do you know what I've done?)

3 Questions: (Spiritual, Emotional, Evangelical)

1—Spiritual: Are you trying to earn what God has already given you by His grace?

- Love—trying to prove to God that you're worthy of His love?
- Working for His approval? Is that why you're here today?
- When your children or grandchildren were newborn babes, did they try to prove to you that they were worthy to love—or did you already love them?

2—Emotional: In what part of your life do you feel empty?

- Are you running to the Lord to fill that emptiness—or are you trying to figure life out on your own?
- Are you trying to fill your life up with a broken worldly bucket?

3—Evangelistic: Are you giving the same grace that God has given you to others?

- When grace flows into your life, does it also flow out?

- There's a life-and-death difference between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.
- Both receive water from the same source.
- The Sea of Galilee has cold, clear, dark blue water that teems with life.
- The Dead Sea is murky and salty—where no life can survive.
- The difference between these two bodies of water are the outlets.
- The Sea of Galilee not only receives, but gives— it flows into the Jordan River, and the Jordan River blesses everything it its path for 135 miles.
- But that's where the blessings stop, because it then empties into the Dead Sea with no outlet.
- The only way the Dead Sea gives back is through evaporation.
- We have received forgiveness; therefore, we should also forgive.
- We have received undeserved kindness; therefore, we should give back kindness.
- We have received an incomprehensible love—therefore, we should learn to love.
- We have received gentleness—therefore, we ought to be gentle with others.

Grace is always an adventure.

Only God knows where it will lead, what blessing it will bring, or what challenge will come.

Grace is not something only to discuss after a sermon or Bible study—but it's meant to be lived out and given to others.

May we learn to live it out—a little more than we did last week.

PRAYER:

BENEDICTION:

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with everyone. Amen. (Rev. 22:21)

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