

Father, we thank you so much for all you have done for us, and we ask that you teach us and bring honor and glory to yourself. In Jesus name we pray, amen.

We're just about to finish the introduction of John which goes through verse 18.

John 1:15 John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'"

Many people want to put stipulations on man that don't belong in Scripture. More than one cult believes that we are eternal by nature, which means we've always existed, and just haven't had a body all of the time, and we will always exist. This verse proves that not to be true. While Jesus Christ is eternal, you did not exist until you were made. Don't think that you've always been around in a spirit form waiting to exist, because you haven't. John (the Baptist) makes it truly clear that Christ was before him. John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb, but he did not exist before he was conceived.

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

A word about translations: I'm using the NIV84 (New International Version 1984) because people prefer it over the King James translation. I have enough King James Bibles set aside, to last me the rest of my life, but when I started preaching here, it was like nobody wanted me to use the KJV! I actually prefer the NASB, (New American Standard Bible), because it's the most accurate, but I couldn't find an edition with print big enough to read from a distance. So, I decided to go with the NIV which is okay because we straighten up the errors in there. We have come to one of those translation errors in verse 16.

The *fullness of his grace* is not what is written in the original language. A better translation would be "*out of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace.*" We have all received not just the fullness of His grace but the fullness of the person of Christ.

We see Jesus as God here. When it says *from out of his fullness*, or *because of his fullness we have all received*, it's not talking about grace, but it is talking about the deity that dwells in the son.

The Gospel of John was written in part to offset Gnosticism. Gnostic in the Greek language means knowledge, or to know something. There were a group of people, branded as Gnostics who believed that they had a secret knowledge that was the source for salvation. Christian Gnosticism has branched off from Christianity over the centuries. One of the characteristics of Gnosticism is that they dilute the Trinity, making it less than what it really is. In John's time, they said that God would never come to the earth, and he certainly wouldn't come in the form of a human. They also said there was not equality between the father and the son. There have been many variations of Gnosticism through the years, but you need to know that Gnosticism still exists today in the form of Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and other religions who have given God different definitions than God gave himself. Some people may think there is not much difference between what we believe compared to what some of these groups believe, and that the differences are not a big deal.

However, the differences are really serious, and Paul warns against this.

2Corinthians 11:4 For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.

Galatians 1:9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

John wrote the Gospel of John to make sure that we understand that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are equal, and they are a Trinity. He wants us to know that they are eternal and self-existent - they always have been, and always will be.

Christ is God. *Colossians 1:19-20 For God was pleased to have **all his fullness** dwell in him, (20) and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Jesus Christ was 100% man when he was on this earth, but he was also 100%, God. You may ask, how can that be? I do not know! He didn't ask me to explain it, he just said it was so and that I'm to believe it.

Colossians 2:9-10 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, (10) and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

Christ was not a man that became God and then became man again.

He is God, and he was always God. Mankind doesn't like the huge gap that exist between man and God which is one of the reasons false religions want to dilute the Trinity by bringing God down. God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He's awesome, and he's unapproachable, I'm a worm, and so are you. John makes it clear, that God can be approached only through the person of his son, Jesus Christ. Man just hates the knowledge that God is so vast, so perfect, and that we are so imperfect and so polluted. It is no surprise that man would feel that way. Isaiah writes about Satan committing the first sin that we know about.

Isaiah 14:12-15 How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! (13) You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. (14) I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." (15) But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.

In other words, Satan didn't like the gap between himself being a created being and God who is self-existent, so he said, I can be like God.

Psalms 53:2-3 God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. (3) Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Ecclesiastes 7:20 There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Look at what Paul says about himself when he tries to live the way God wants him to live, without the power of God to help him do it.

Romans 7:15-25 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. (16) And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. (17) As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. (18) I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. (19) For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. (20) Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. (21) So I find this law at

work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. (22) For in my inner being I delight in God's law; (23) but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. (24) What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (25) Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

So, we have God on one side, an unapproachable being who is always one thousand percent correct who hates evil. He never winks at evil and says it's okay. Then there's man on the other side, who can't do anything right! Even the right things we try to do isn't right. Our motives always seem to be selfish. God wants to show us for what we are.

In chapter 42 of Job, we have Job talking to God. In previous chapters, Job felt abandoned and complained that God was treating him unfairly, and that he had no way to confront God. Then God explained things to Job and Job "sees the light."

Job 42:5-6 My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. (6) Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

In Isaiah 6 the good King Uzziah had died, and Isaiah saw where God was. This is what he said when he saw the presence of God. (There had been no king like Uzziah since Solomon. Needless to say, Isaiah loved Uzziah deeply and was sad.)

Isaiah 6:1-5 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple (2) Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. (3) And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." (4) At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. [What he saw was not actually God, because no man has seen God and lived. What he saw was an image of God, and where God resided.] (5) "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."

My friend, you can't walk up to God and tell him anything. You can't demand anything; you can't even ask him to damn something and have him do it. Yet people throw his name around like it's nothing. The Jews with all of their faults, at least honor the name of God. If you've ever seen Jewish writings, you know that they never spell out

the name "God." They will not write the name God on a piece of paper because they don't know what might happen to that piece of paper. Instead, they use the capital letters G and D separated by a hyphen, so they won't blaspheme or disparage God's name.

There is no reason that God should have shown us any grace whatsoever, but he did. We have no idea how magnificent God is and while we're never going to understand it, we should keep working at it from now through eternity.

John 1:16 From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.

A better translation would be "**Out** of His fullness have we all received, and grace for grace."

Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve. (You may need to be smacked around, but if God has mercy on you, he won't do it.) Grace is those good things that God loves to give us that we do not deserve.

That's grace for grace. The preposition *for* or *anti* in the Greek is the same prefix used in antichrist. It does not mean against grace but in this context, it means to replace. In other words, grace replaces grace. That means today God is going to give you all the grace out of the fullness of the person of Christ that you need to live today, but he's not going to give you today what you need to live the next day. Tomorrow, He will give you what you need for that day. As you need His grace, it's always available. It's a living supply of God's grace. There would not be a person in this room if it weren't for God's grace. Every one of us would be dead or worse. Out of His fullness, we have all received grace with grace replacing grace.

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

This is tremendous. Laws are a set of rules that you are supposed to follow. When we think of the law, we usually think about the 10 commandments which came through Moses: Thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not murder, etc.

There are all kinds of laws. We even make up our own laws, such as I'm not going to drink, cuss, or swear, and once in a while I'll give a little bit of money to God. I'm just going to be a good person. The moment you decide to live by law, or a set of rules, you must adhere to those rules one hundred per cent or there will be consequences.

Do you see what the contract is? There is no grace in the law. Thou shalt not, but if you do, death is the punishment. There is no grace. Law brings

only death to lost people. If you think you're someone who's done a good enough job at being good, and that will save you, read what Matthew says.

Matthew 5:21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

If you stop reading there you might think you're home free. But read on:

Matthew 5:22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Have you ever been angry with someone? If so, you are guilty of murder. But there is more:

Matthew 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' (28) But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The reality is every one of us is guilty of breaking the commandments. The moment you veer to one side or the other, the moment you deviate from perfection, then you are guilty of breaking the commandments. I don't want God's justice. I want his mercy and his grace. I think that's probably what you want as well. The idea that you can live good enough comes straight out of the pit of hell. We were all conceived in sin. By that I mean, sin is passed on from one generation to the next. Read what God says, when he talks about grace versus works.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— (9) not by works, so that no one can boast.

You are never going to be able to walk up to God and put your thumbs in your vest and say, "God, here I am, I did it." That will never work. You're going to come humbly by grace or you're not coming at all. There are two kinds of grace, by the way. They both come from him and they're both grace. There is saving grace and living grace. You are saved by grace when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, after which we live by grace moment by moment. God has nothing for you until you're saved by grace.

John 1:18 No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

No one can see God and live. If God let you go to heaven right now, you would not survive. Even Moses, who God spoke directly to as a friend, couldn't see God and live. That's why we must be changed as described in First Corinthians.

1Corinthians 15:52-54 (KJV) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

To summarize, we find this in the first 18 verses of John.

1. Jesus Christ and God, the Father, are eternal, and equal.
2. Jesus Christ is 100% Man and 100% God,
3. God is unapproachable, except through Jesus Christ.
4. Jesus is the light of the world, but He was rejected
5. Jesus came to His own (Jews) and they rejected him.

So, there's this guy out by the Jordan River, baptizing people, and crowds of people are going out to see and hear him. They are being baptized and they love him. Who is this guy? People were getting so excited that they began to think that maybe he was the Christ who they had been looking for. It was John the Baptist!

John 1:19-28 Now this was John's testimony when the Jews [Note: When John uses the term "the Jews" throughout John's Gospel, he's talking about the lost people of Israel not the saved people of Israel.] of Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. (20) He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Christ." (21) They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." (22) Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" (23) John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (24) Now some Pharisees who had been sent (25) questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" (26) "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know. (27) He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." (28) This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

A more accurate translation is that priests and Levites were sent to him from Jerusalem.

Why wouldn't John go to Jerusalem if he was going to share the living truth with people? He stayed out of Jerusalem as a condemnation to the religious leaders. He was communicating that the religious system

that they had was a failure, and he wasn't going to be anything like any of them.

Matthew 3:4-6 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. (5) People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. (6) Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

Someone has written that he was eating locust plants. That is wrong, he ate bugs and wild honey. Camels hair was very coarse and scratchy and would have been uncomfortable. John was a man who was who was austere in his nature compared to the religious leaders who lived in Jerusalem with pomp, and ceremony, luxury, and opulence. In effect he was saying, "I'm not having anything to do with any of that. You guys are losers and failures and I'm not going to buy into your system." His message was a condemnation of them. Read what He said in Matthew 3.

Matthew 3:7-9 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? (8) Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. (9) And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

While John was despised by the religious leaders, he was very popular with the general population who were looking for something else.

Luke 3:15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.

John made it very clear that he was not the Christ in verse 20. Furthermore, he also told them he wasn't Elijah (verse 21) or the Prophet. (By the Prophet, they were referring to the Prophet who Moses said the Lord would raise up, which would have been the Messiah. Obviously, they didn't need to ask that question because John had already said that he wasn't Christ the Messiah.)

(21) They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." (22) Finally they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" (23) John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (24) Now some Pharisees who had been sent questioned him,

A more accurate translation of verse 24 is: *John 1:24 Some messengers had been sent from the Pharisees.*

The Pharisees didn't go, they sent people to question him. It would have been beneath their dignity to ask questions themselves because they were proud and thought they needed no repentance and didn't want to be around anyone that was preaching repentance.

So, here's the question. *(25) ---- "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"*

Why were they so infuriated about him baptizing? It was because baptizing is what the Jews did to a Gentile, when they wanted to become a Jew. It wasn't something that was done to a Jew, it was for the Gentile "dogs." John was baptizing the Jews as if they were Gentile dogs, like they needed a savior. In their minds, the Jews had Abraham as their father, so they didn't need to be baptized. In other words, *"I know these other people need baptizing, but not me. I'm a good guy. I'm a Jew. I have Abraham as my father."* Today, some might say this: *"You know, Christianity may be fine for you, but I don't need to be a Christian. Christianity is a crutch for people who are weak, but I'm not weak. I'll lead a good life and it will turn out o.k."*

Please read this very carefully. If you are without Jesus Christ as your Savior, and die right now, you will spend the next trillion billion million years in hell with no hope, no vacations, no breaks, no time off. And that's just the first day. Never, ever think that you can live a life good enough for a holy righteous God. It is impossible.

For those of us that are saved, be reminded that we have partaken of all of his fullness. It is by grace that we're saved through faith, not any work of our own. It's a gift of God. When was the last time you stopped and just really thought about what it is to be saved? My friends, I would encourage you to stop and do that. I then would ask if you are living the full life using God's grace moment by moment. If you're using your time just to live and exist, and to live a mundane life, then you're wasting your time. God has called you to live on a high plane with him. Society doesn't understand

Christ or God and the world is in the process of going to hell. Sometimes we forget why we are here and let the world rub off on us. We begin to gripe and moan just like everyone else. We forget that we're going to live forever and that we're redeemed. We're all unworthy of Christ but it's only by his grace that any of us can come to a relationship with him. I don't know when the last time you thanked him, but it's probably been too long.

Let's pray. Father, how we thank you for your son. Oh, how we thank you for eternal life. First, I pray that if anyone here is not in a right relationship with you and doesn't know your son, that where they are right now you will cause them to turn to him and believe in your son and accept the gift of eternal life, through your grace, through your son. For the rest of us, sometimes we forget where we've come from. We forget that you saved us. Sometimes we just kind of get busy. We forget that you have called us, and that before we were born, you created something for us to do. Someday we are going to see you face to face and give an account for that. I pray that you will cause us to once again rededicate ourselves to you fresh and new and to recklessly abandon all of life to live for you. Oh, how we thank you and how we love you. We've made it through another year. And that means we're a year closer to your son coming back for us. In His name we pray, Amen.