

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Volume 67, Number 5

Editor ~ Wade Stanley

Publisher ~ Doug Twaddell

May, 2025

He Emptied Himself

Dan Huff

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-9).

This is a very rich and thought-provoking statement from the Apostle Paul. The American Standard Version (ASV) says, “but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...” (2:7a)

What does it mean that Jesus emptied Himself? He was willing to set aside His glory and His authority that He had in heaven. As some of our poets have described, He left the palace, the court of heaven in all its glory and magnificence, and what did He exchange it for? He was born in a manger – a feed trough – among the animals. It appears He was born into a financially poor family, from the two birds that were offered as a sacrifice instead of a lamb (Luke 2:22-24; Leviticus 12:8).

How can any of us finite mortals understand the immortal taking on mortality, the mighty taking on frailty and weakness, laying aside spiritual glory, power, and authority to take a body like yours and mine (John 1:1-3, 14)? He did not consider this something that He had to grasp at all cost and could not let go.

When Jesus emptied Himself, He did not set aside His character, principles, or Who He is. He was/is 100% man and 100% God. Consenting to be a man was the most remarkable display of a humble spirit. This brought to fruition the plan for our salvation, which Peter informs us was in place before the Father, Son, and Spirit even created us (1 Peter 1:20-21). Why did Jesus do this? Motivated by love for the Father and fallen mankind, who were lost in the bondage and slavery of sin, He was willing to empty Himself, making no reputation for Himself.

Before His betrayal, Jesus prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5). There was glory Jesus had which He emptied (i.e. divested Himself of). As His death, burial, and resurrection were near, He longed for that glory.

I believe He had set aside or emptied Himself of His glory so that He could be approachable by men and women. Retaining that glory could have made it impossible for Him to fulfill His purpose for coming. Paul points out that Jesus, King of kings and LORD of lords, now dwells in unapproachable light (1 Timothy 6:16). Could this be a part of the glory He laid aside to become one of us?

He was not only made in the likeness of men, but He partook of our nature, our struggles, and our infirmities. He experienced pain, sorrow, and disappointment. He was a

Consider having the power, the ability, and the means to comfort yourself to prevent your death. Consider the greater power He displayed – exercising His self-control – not using the power to help Himself or destroy His enemies because He knew the world was resting on His shoulders.

servant of all – emptying Himself of privileges and advantages. Obeying the Law of Moses, He did not consider Himself above the law as many in power do. He yielded perfect obedience to the will of God.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:17-18).

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we

continued on the next page...

may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:15-16).

He understands our plight – our temptations and weaknesses – offering help in our time of need. He emptied Himself of privileges and advantages. Jesus is God. Jesus has the power of God. Yet, He never used that power for His own personal comforts or self. Can you imagine having the power to come down off the cross but not exercising that power? Though He was reviled, He did not revile in return (see **1 Peter 2:21-25**).

Consider having the power, the ability, and the means to comfort yourself to prevent your death. Consider the greater power He displayed – exercising His self-control – not using the power to help Himself or destroy His enemies because He knew the world was resting on His shoulders. The redemption of the souls of men and women depended on Him. There was no plan B or C.

He humbled Himself and became subject and obedient to death, even the most shameful and cruel death man could devise at the time—the death of the cross. It was not the death of a soldier dying in a blaze of glory and honor. It was not the death that a faithful servant might incur, falling among robbers, although Jesus was THE faithful servant (**Mark 10:45**). It was the death of the lowest: the long, lingering, painful, humiliating death of the cross. It was not the nails that held or kept Him on the cross; no, it was love! It was love for His Father and the Father's plan for our salvation (**John 4:34**) and love for our lost souls. His whole humiliation and service from birth to the cross was His own voluntary act (**John 10:17-18**). He yielded and submitted Himself. No one took His life from Him; He gave it.

Considering what Jesus has done for us, what should our response be to such amazing love?

~ 7 Ross Rd., Eldon, MO 65026-4416
werhuffs@proton.me

Grace

Kevin Crittenden

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

I have to admit that even though I've been an apolitical, Christ-centered Christian for well over a month now, I still struggle with the seemingly simple concept of grace. Grace, of

course, is a fundamental cornerstone of the Christian faith – absolutely necessary to our salvation. But what IS it, exactly?

Here is one definition of grace:

Grace is God's making up the difference between the requirements of His righteous law, and what we lack in meeting those requirements. No one is good enough to earn salvation by himself, so God's grace simply makes up for what we lack. Some receive more grace than others; but all receive whatever they need to obtain salvation. No one ever needs be lost, because whatever grace they need is theirs for the taking.

I find myself living as if this were the true definition of grace. Which it isn't. I like to think of myself as a basically good person who sometimes acts in ways that hopefully are pleasing to God. So far, so good. But I also find myself pridefully thinking that I have a better chance of a Heavenly reward than others who — although they have accepted God's saving grace through baptism — have had difficulty changing their worldly lifestyle.

Essentially, I find myself tallying up good works as if those merited extra grace. But then I run into this: "*And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace*" (**Romans 11:6**). Grace and work are mutually exclusive. I know this intellectually but haven't integrated it fully yet.

Consider the following example.

The record for the longest jump in the sport of long-jump is held by Mike Powell at 8.95 meters (29 feet 4 1/4 inches). Now, I can jump as well – maybe as far as 2 or 3 feet with a strong tailwind. If Mike and I were to compete in jumping, he would be far more likely to win the prize.

Now suppose that to attain the prize, we had to jump clear across the Grand Canyon. Neither of us could succeed, so all of my competitor's athletic prowess, skill, and experience came to nothing. He is no better than I in that case. If grace were needed to pull us to the other side, then he and I would need the same amount.

All my good works, etc. etc. are not credited towards grace. In fact, look at what Isaiah says: "*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags*" (**Isaiah 64:6**). A **better** understanding of grace is this:

Grace is God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him.

And we **cannot think** that we need **less** grace than others – that

is a prideful and judgmental thought and has no place in our Christian walk. We have all wandered this way and that way: *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way” (Isaiah 53:6)*. This “turning our own way” pretty much sums up the definition of sin. And it affects “we all.”

But we see God’s favor and love in Isaiah as well: *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost” (Isaiah 55:1)*. We have no money (our righteous acts do not count). And yet we are able, out of the grace of God, to have the good things in life, without money and without cost.

Before coming to Christ, we were spiritually destitute, blind, unclean, and dead. Our souls were in peril of everlasting punishment. This is the general backdrop showcasing our need for God’s grace. Actually, the word “need” doesn’t do justice to the concept. It’s like saying of a drowning man, “I guess he needs a rope.” Grace is something that saves us in a “life or death” situation.

But look what happens when we come to Christ. Through grace, God extends His favor to us. Grace is what saves us. It is the essence of the gospel. Grace gives us victory over sin and allows us to conquer death.

My challenge and continued pattern of growth is to learn to put away my worldly experiences and expectations of earned grace and grow into the awe of God’s unmerited and undeserved grace.

~ 19130 Meiggs Ln. Cupertino, CA 95014
kcritt2@aol.com

Glory to God!

Toby Cantrell was baptized in Christ at **S. Fairfax Church of Christ** in **Bakersfield, CA** March 16. The congregation was doubly blessed when **Ruth Fry** made her profession of faith in Jesus and was baptized March 30.

The church in **Martinsville, IN** was overjoyed when **Katelyn, Aiden, and Raegan Long** were baptized for the remission of sins on March 16.

Blessed Are the Dead

Ronnie Murry of the **Orange Ave** congregation in **Anaheim, CA** left this world behind to enter into his Lord's peace and comfort

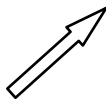
February 26. He was a faithful worker for Christ from his teens when he sought out the church and also brought his mom and brother to the faith of Christ, until his departure at the age of 87. **Ronnie** was a gentle man and beloved brother and is greatly missed.

Dennis Fry of the **S. Fairfax** congregation in **Bakersfield, CA** left his uncooperative body behind and went to be with the Lord February 28. **Dennis** took his last breath in peace and comfort, with family that loved him dearly at his side, passing out of this world safe in the capable arms of the Lord.

Stephanie Lyn Long, 42, of Martinsville, IN went into the loving arms of Jesus with her family by her side on Monday, March 17, 2025. She was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on Monday, August 2, 1982. After high school, **Stephanie** attended the IUPUI campus in Indianapolis where she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from the Indiana University School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. She became a registered occupational therapist in the state of Indiana. In 2015, **Stephanie** stopped working to begin her fight with cancer. Over the course of 9 1/2 years, she had nearly 170 rounds of various chemo treatments. She never hesitated in taking these treatments, no matter what the side effects or challenges were, because she trusted in God’s plan for her. **Stephanie** was a devoted member of the Church of Christ. She was also a devoted and loving wife, mother, and daughter. She was very pleased with the accomplishments of her children. **Stephanie** loved spending time with her family by going on various outdoor vacations. She loved the beach, and she loved camping in the Ozarks, as long as it was in an RV with air conditioning. She set an example of faith by supporting others with encouraging words and taking her family to church meetings. She loved to embrace the fellowship and friendships of others through the church with people in other states. She loved going to her children's sporting events, and she was an avid movie watcher (especially with crime tv series). She loved to cook, especially baking or making her family’s birthday cakes. She truly loved her family and wanted to make each day special for them. She is survived by her husband, **Mark R. Long**; children: **Nathan S. Long, Katelyn E. Long, Aiden K. Long, Raegan S. Long**; and father, **Steven Burchett**. **Stephanie** is preceded in death by her mother, **Susan (Thompson) Burchett**.

Here and There

After many months of prayerful contemplation, your editor decided to pass on his duties to another evangelist. With



Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Here and There"

several younger evangelists entering the work in recent years, your editor and publisher felt the time was ripe to seek out another editor. Your publisher, **Doug Twaddell**, will remain.

Joshua Riggins, an evangelist sent out by the church in **Bloomfield, IN**, has agreed to take on the role of editor beginning **August 1, 2025**. Ordained in February 2016, Joshua has distinguished himself as a capable teacher and a wise steward of his responsibilities. His articles in *The Gospel Message* have been doctrinally sound, well-written, and insightful. Your editor and publisher believe Joshua will carry on this good work with prudence, care, and integrity.

On a personal note, your editor would like to thank you for the many kind words of support and helpful feedback he has received for the past thirteen years. He also feels deeply grateful for the men who have contributed articles during his stewardship. Their hard work has made editing this paper an absolute joy. Your editor would also like to thank his proofreader, **Melissa Trusty**, for her quiet efforts behind the scenes. As a retired English teacher, Sister Melissa has meticulously ensured the grammatical accuracy of the paper. Finally, your editor is profoundly grateful to your publisher, **Doug Twaddell**. Doug has been a pleasure to work with, and your editor cannot imagine a better companion to help fulfill this ministry.

The church in **Vandalia, IA** is pleased to announce that **Trent Fiorentin** was ordained an evangelist by the elders of the congregation on March 30. May God bless Trent in this new endeavor!

Special Meetings

The church in **Vandalia, IA** has rescheduled its annual weekend meeting. Father's Day falls on June 15 this year, so to avoid conflicts with that holiday, the congregation has moved the meeting back to **June 7-8, 2025**. The meeting will return to the second weekend of June in future years, Lord willing.

2025 Special Meetings

- May 24-25.....Memorial Day Meeting,
hosted by the **Murray Road COC, Lee's Summit, MO**
- May 24-25.....Memorial Day Meeting,
hosted by the **South Fairfax COC, Bakersfield, CA**
- June 7-8.....Weekend Meeting, Vandalia IA
- June 30-July 4.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO
hosted by the **Prince Road COC, Alton, IL**
- July 19.....Family VBS
hosted by the **Old Lamine COC, rural Blackwater, MO**
- August 30-31.....Labor Day Meeting, Pleasant Hill, IA

The Gospel Message

To renew a subscription, add a new subscription, inquire about a subscription, or cancel a subscription, please contact **your publisher**:

**The Gospel Message, % Doug Twaddell, 1700 S. Ann Ct.
Independence, MO 64057 twadsquad@earthlink.net**

To renew on The Gospel Message website, use your phone or tablet camera to click the QR code to the left. The print version is available for \$10 per year. An email version is available for \$5 per year.



If you would like to announce baptisms, new members, deaths, or special meetings in **The Gospel Message**, please contact **your editor**:

**Wade Stanley, 18078 State Highway 149, Unionville, MO
63565 wadestanley@gmail.com**

If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this paper, please either contact **the author** of the article or **your editor**.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE (USPS:576-040) (ISSN:1054-7991) is published monthly for \$10 per year by **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057. Periodicals Postage Paid at Independence, MO. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to **THE GOSPEL MESSAGE**, 1700 S. Ann Ct., Independence, MO 64057