a certain standard or requirement. This is the earliest and most infantile feeling. Everything the little baby desires is at the discretion of the parent. He cannot feed himself or take care of his most elementary needs. It does not take long to reach the conclusion that he is rather inadequate and unworthy. This is not an intellectual assent, but a definite and certain emotional stance. No one can escape his emotional self-analysis. Although man often tries to evade this self-estimation, it becomes a haunting voice constantly whispering into his soul. He tries to evade through the attainment of certain external symbols—credentials—which are often earnest efforts to prove to himself that he is worthy, that he is adequate. Still the haunting voice plagues him.

What about this voice? What is one to do about this inner feeling of emptiness? There comes a nearly reflex answer from deep in the feeling level of his psyche: “I must please God! I must do the things that he demands! It worked with my parents and it helped my feelings of unworthiness. It will work again.”

The man who sees God as his parents searches for that which God wants of him. Clear answers are given him: recognize your sin, repent, accept Christ as your Savior, and live a life worthy of his salvation and his name. “Ah,” the Christian says, “this is Grace.”

Yet, behold this “Grace.” It is merely a reflex of the old emotional stance in a different “bag.” Repentance is usually understood as “being sorry.” Yet there is a level at which it is also understood as involving a requirement. The individual begins to ask, “How much doing is required?—How about the sin factor?—How clear and long will my list of duties be?” Jesus’ acceptance becomes parental acceptance: He loves you, will make you a new person—if you obey.

The world is full of guilty souls trying to satisfy their empty, inadequate lives. Their so-called “gospel” only compounds their guilt and inadequacy by offering a cheap grace reinforced by old parent–child relationships. They continue to search for new credentials, symbols of adequacy (i.e. serving the church, entering the ministry, becoming a deacon, “saving souls”).

On the other hand, the positive affirmation of Grace by man is a feeling of real personal worth and acceptance. Jesus saw the wandering masses of man laboring under the yoke of false credentials—seeking to prove their worthiness through a code of law. He cried out: “Come to me, all you that labor and are heavy laden... for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Jesus, the Christ, offers no external symbols or credentials. He offers free Grace. God’s Grace is a great surprise. It is foreign to our normal instincts, our natural reflexes, and our emotional gratifications standards. He says, ‘You do nothing; you act in no particular way. Your acceptance is simply your acknowledgment that I am yours, that I accept you.’

The fruits of the Grace of God are a sense of personal acceptance, an