

### Issue 9...God's Promise of Powerful Grace

The great evangelist Billy Graham once said; *"Grace is not sought, nor bought, nor wrought. It is a free gift of Almighty God to needy mankind."* For just a minute say the word "grace" with me. Come on say it. As soon as the word leaves your lips your mind rushes to the great hymn; "Amazing Grace." A hymn that was written by a converted slave trader in the 1800's. John Newton was a rough, immoral man who later described himself as a "wretch." Which according to the lifestyle he was living was true. Then by the providence of God through a set of severe-life-threatening circumstances He was dramatically changed to a new man. Soon afterwards he would become both a famous songwriter and pastor. It's no wonder the first line in his most famous song says *"Amazing Grace how sweet sound that saved a wretch like me."* In this teaching today I pray to give you some of the same revelation that John Newton received that changed him into a new man. You see God's grace is powerful. And it's sufficient. Look at what God told Paul when he prayed to have his troubles taken away from him.

*2 Corinthians 12:9 (NKJV) <sup>9</sup>And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.*

Have you ever done something to someone that was bad? I mean really bad! You knew you were wrong and so did everyone else around you, but you didn't listen and did it anyway. Then later on your boss forgave you or your spouse did, or a child had to forgive you and they did. ***Friend that's grace!*** It's best described as God's unmerited favor.

From the beginning of the recorded history of man we have God forgiving mankind for their actions against him.

Just take the nation of Israel for instance and all the wrong behavior they demonstrated against God and look at how he received them back again.

*Nehemiah 9:31 (NKJV) <sup>31</sup> Nevertheless in Your great mercy You did not utterly consume them nor forsake them; For You are God, gracious and merciful.*

Now to totally understand this promise we have to totally understand a few things.

**1—First God's grace is what saves us.** The bible clearly states in Romans 3:23 that all mankind has sinned against God. So nobody stands before God clean. Romans 6:23 declares that someone must pay for sins against God -because the wages of sin is death. And even though all mankind deserves death that's where God's unmerited favor comes in; Grace comes in and gives us the opportunity to be saved from the destructive force of sin and judgment.

*Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV) <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,*

Grace is God's intentional bestowal of his loving favor on those he saves. We can't earn it just accept it. We cannot save ourselves it is a gift of God. And according to Romans 3:24 we must

receive it through Jesus Christ.

*Romans 3:24 (NKJV) <sup>24</sup>being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,*

**2—Secondly we must understand that God guides us by his grace...** Like John Newton, the apostle Paul was a despicable character before his conversation-- *even to the point of killing Christians.* And yet even with that stained past he could say because of God's grace;

*1 Corinthians 15:10 (NKJV) <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

You see just like you and me God's grace reached down and changed Saul of Tarsus into Paul the apostle. He went from a Christian hater to being a Christian lover and both Jews and gentiles alike. According to God's word that's how you know that you have eternal life. You know that you have changed from darkness to light if you have love for the brethren. If you don't like church people you probably don't have eternal life. All those poor deceived people in our world today that say they love God and that Jesus is their savior and they don't go to church because they say they don't like the church. ***Oh God please help them. Wake them up before it's too late.***

At Paul's conversion after he found out that the bright light that blinded him was Jesus Paul's first question was; *Lord what do you want me to do for you?*

And as he followed the grace of God he was led into the life of suffering that God had prepared for him.

**3—It's only by God's grace can we live an empowered life...** You don't have to be a Christian very long to realize that the Christian life is no bed of roses. In fact God tells us *2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) <sup>12</sup>Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Now how's that for a promise to sink your teeth into?* So knowing what awaits us how do we always gain the victory? Let this little acrostic work for you as it has me.

**G**-ive thanks to God

**R**-espond in love & obedience

**A**-sk God for wisdom and understanding in times of trouble.

**C**-ommune with other believers at church and receive training in the ways of God's grace.

**E**-xtend God's grace to others by sharing the gospel with them and shining the life of Jesus to those outside the ark of safety.

Continued next month