

More Than Talk

PROGRAM 27 PAGE 1

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE: YOU'RE IN ON IT!

Page 1 God's Grace Is Life Changing

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

There are two great extremes to avoid - both of which lead to blindness and destruction. The first is to fool ourselves that good works and following the "golden rule" will lead to heaven. Since every man is a sinner, every man needs a Savior. The second extreme error can be found in churches that supposedly teach the Bible as truth. Evangelicals have fallen into the devil's trap of "cheap grace" - that the grace of forgiveness requires no repentance and that righteous behavior is not essential to salvation.

The New Testament, in context, teaches the exact opposite. Divine grace is not an alternative to godly behavior, but the means to a godly life. Our verse today - and all others that teach about God's wonderful grace - proves the point. In Ephesians 2:8,9 we see that we are saved by faith alone and that even such faith is a gift of God. But then verse ten brings out God's wonderful plan in using our lives to demonstrate His reality to our world by making us His own handiwork "recreated in Christ Jesus, (born anew) that we may do those good works which God predestined (planned beforehand) for us, taking paths which He prepared ahead of time that we should walk in them..." (v 10 Amplified).

This is just another way to say people know us by our fruits. "Cheap grace" allows a person to claim Christ and yet live in practiced sin.

Those who teach or believe this have fallen for Satan's deception. True grace is very costly, for it cost God's Son His blood and life. True grace takes me "just as I am" but doesn't leave me there. The true grace of God requires true repentance of man and leads to a life marked by obedience rather than one that excuses sin.

My prayer: "So let me appreciate Your loving grace, my Father, that I will truly repent of my sin and become Your own handiwork to bring forth a life of good works. I do believe that Your powerful grace must lead to righteous behavior."

PROGRAM 27 PAGE 2

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE: YOU'RE IN ON IT!

Page 2 When You Can't Avoid The Thorns

"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." 2 Corinthians 12:9

This single scripture has both the Father and His child, Paul, saying something important. If anyone could have boasted of his past religious and intellectual credentials, it was Paul. And talk about heavenly experiences; he had it all! Meeting the risen Messiah near Damascus, being taken to the third-heaven abode of God, obtaining a personal earthquake from God on his and Silas' behalf at Philippi...and more! But the Father in His mercy knew how to keep His faithful child from getting puffed up. He used - and uses on you and me - a thorn in the flesh (one affliction or another) to keep Paul - and us - from pride that would destroy us and prevent Jesus from being seen as the Source of our strength, song and spirituality.

Let the Amplified Bible speak to our hearts as we, like Paul, are blessed with deeper revelations of truth from the Lord: "And to keep me from being puffed up...there was given me a thorn (a splinter) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to buffet me, to keep me from being excessively exalted." (v 7) Whatever Paul's thorn was, it hurt enough to have him beg God three times to remove it. And that's when He heard the Lord tell him: "...My strength and power are made perfect - fulfilled and completed and show themselves more effective - in your weakness." He gives you and me - no matter our position in the Kingdom - that same encouragement. No wonder Paul could - and now we can - declare the other half of today's verse: "Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ, the Messiah, may rest - yes, may pitch a tent over and dwell - upon me!" (v 9 Amplified) We can also join Paul in saying that whatever "infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities or distresses" we face or shall face, "when I am weak in human strength, then am I truly strong - able, powerful in divine strength." (v 10 Amplified)

My prayer: "I don't seek thorns as my teachers, Father, but when You allow them, help me not to complain but to comply with Your insistence that only Jesus be seen in me."

PROGRAM 27 PAGE 3

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE: YOU'RE IN ON IT!

Page 3 The Object Of God's Grace

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon 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." I Corinthians 15:10

Saul of Tarsus - Paul - never forgot the pit from where he had been removed by Yeshua the Messiah. He considered himself "less than the least" of all saints. But his was not a false humility that said, "Who am I that I should dare think that God wishes to use me?" On the contrary, Paul was so overwhelmed by God's grace toward him that he refused to let such grace count for little or nothing. Chief of sinners, yes. Worthy of hell, a thousand times yes. The most notorious enemy of Jesus, yes. But now he knew the truth - now he had been singled out for love from the One whom he had hated. Now no powers of devils or men would hold him back from giving His Lord 110%!

So it must be with you and me. Look at our truth again: 1) it is God's grace that transforms and empowers us; 2) that grace can be "fruitless and without effect" (Amplified) if we smother it through disobedience, laziness and unbelief; 3) His grace (favor and blessing) counts big as we bear fruit - and that requires work, and lots of it. Paul could say, "I worked harder than all of them (the apostles)" (Amplified), yet there was no self-glory as he added, "though it was not really I, but the grace of God which was with me." (Amplified)

Never assume your Christian life to be the easy road - nor God's grace to substitute for effort. His grace gives you strength to work harder than ever. On the job. In your home. At your church. In studying the Bible, praying, and hiding God's Word in your heart. As a faithful witness in your world. Doing God's will is just that - "DOING" - not just thinking about it. That equals W-O-R-K - which is the object of God's G-R-A-C-E!

My prayer: "Father, I don't want the men of this world who work for only gold to be more committed to that than I am to working for You. I will not let Your grace be in vain in my life. Give me a heart that chooses to work my hardest for You."

PROGRAM 27 PAGE 4

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE: YOU'RE IN ON IT!

Page 4 Dare To Believe It

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." 2 Corinthians 13:14

This verse is more than a benediction we often hear and let go through both ears without thought. On the contrary, here is a truth so incredible that only the spiritually-minded can grasp it. Here is the Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in action on behalf of every individual believer - you included. Grace! Love! Fellowship! My friend, that's all you'll ever need. Everything important flows from these three gifts from God. There is grace through Jesus - His favor lavished on **you**. There is love from the Father that knows no human limits - for **you**. There is 24-7 fellowship (every hour of every day of your life) offered **you** by the Holy Spirit who says, "I won't just walk alongside you - I'll come to live within you."

And note how the verse ends - "be with you all." No use you saying you don't qualify or that you're unworthy of such attention. That would be like telling the Almighty that He doesn't mean what He says! Get used to believing God. Then you won't be like nine-year old Joey (I learned this story through e-mail) who was asked by his Mom what he had learned in Sunday School. "Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. At the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge, and all the people walked across safely. He used his walkie-talkie to radio headquarters and call in an air strike. They sent in bombers to blow up the bridge and the Israelites were saved." "Now Joey, is that REALLY what your teacher said?" "Well, no, Mom, but if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

Now look at today's verse again. And dare to believe it just the way God told it!

My prayer: "I do believe you, Lord. Thank You for grace, love and fellowship given me every moment of life until the end of my days. Take me to new depths as I meditate on such a wondrous truth."

PROGRAM 27 PAGE 5

GOD'S AMAZING GRACE: YOU'RE IN ON IT!

Page 5 Don't Fear To Draw Near

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

Help. We all need it throughout life. Help in lifting a heavy load, solving a tough problem, getting relief from pain and suffering, etc. So we seek the aid of people, whether family, friends or others. But we can also worry about wearing them out or wearing out our welcome.

But just look at God's incomparable invitation to you. He who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and eternal - no beginning, no end - who is so pure and holy that we just don't get it - tells you to "fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to...the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners; that we may receive mercy for our failures and find grace to help in good time for every need - appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it." (v 16 Amplified)

I remember a tender scene when the child of a U.S. President was playing under the desk while the President worked in the oval office. While grown-ups scurried in and out from this setting of power, the lad was perfectly at home as he jumped into his father's lap beaming, "You're my daddy!"

And so the Father is to us. But at what price! Heaven's High Priest willingly assumed a criminal's death - the lowest form - on a cross between two thieves. He felt everything you and I do - for 33 years.

That's why He is able "to understand and sympathize and have a fellow feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation" because He was "tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning." (v 15 Amplified) So don't hold back out of fear. Draw near in awe and reverence for all the mercy that you will continually need and all the grace that the President of the Universe - your Abba (Daddy) has promised to lavish on you.

My prayer: "What can I say, precious Father, to such love that bids me come fearlessly to Your throne of grace for mercy and forgiveness of all my sins and Your grace, favor and help to be mine in every need?! I shall tell You all my heart that I might experience more of the heart of Jesus."