

# Times Of Greater Grace

Teaching given by Peter Warren at FGPC, May-July 2014

## Acts 4.33

*“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And **great grace** was upon them all.”*

## 1. What Is Grace?

At the end of last year/beginning of this year the Lord spoke with me about this year being a year of greater things. In that word He spoke to my heart, He said that:

*2014 would be a year of GREATER things; GREATER manifestations of Himself; GREATER manifestations of grace, love and power. He said that believers would see and do GREATER things*

Over the last couple of months we have been seeing how love functions and operates – one of the verses we looked at is found 1 Corinthians 12.31 – Love is the more excellent way. Love is the greater way. As we walk out our lives in the love of God, we will experience Him to a greater degree.

Tonight I want us to take a new topic – looking at the outworking of grace in our lives and how we can experience and know 'Times of Greater Grace'

The early church had this experience in Acts 4

*“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And **great grace** was upon them all.”*

Before we continue, let us look at what grace is – what is the Biblical definition of grace?

The English word grace appears 170 times in the AV – 39 in OT and 131 in NT (148 times in NKJV)

- However, the most common Greek word for grace, *charis*, appears 156 times in NT and 78 times in OT (total 234).
- *Charis* is good-will, loving-kindness, favour, pleasure, delight; blessing and reward (Grace – **God's Riches/Rewards At Christ's Expense**). It also has the idea of a goodly appearance, beauty. The Hebrew word *chén* means the same – favour, kindness.
- One key attribute of grace is that it is totally undeserved and unmerited. There is nothing that we can do to earn grace, it is God's favour and good-will towards us which result in blessings.
- *Charis* is derived from the word *chairo* which means 'to be well, blessed, and full of joy'. It was a common greeting among the Greek people (James 1.1, Acts 15.23). As shalom (peace) was for the Hebrews, which is why Paul often began and ended his epistles by pronouncing grace (and peace) to his readers – Romans 1.7, Romans 16.24; 1 Corinthians 1.3, 1 Corinthians 16.23; 2 Corinthians 1.2, 2 Corinthians 13.14; Galatians 1.3, Galatians 6.18; Ephesians 1.2, Ephesians 6.18; Colossians 1.2, Colossians 4.18;
- Peter also used 'grace' as a greeting - 1 Peter 1.2; 2 Peter 1.2

- Another meaning and use of the word *charis* or grace is in connection with the giving of thanks. Romans 6.17, Luke 17.9, Colossians 3.16 are just a few good examples of *charis* being used to express thanksgiving. **Note how some languages have adopted this word to use it in this way (grazzi, grazie, gracias).** The English words grateful and gratitude (both meaning thankful) also have been derived from this word. The word **gratis**, which means 'free' is a contraction of **gratia** meaning 'favour'. Grace is therefore the free favour and blessing of God bestowed upon man.  
The prayer we pray over the food at eating times is often called grace. We speak blessing over the food and give thanks to God for it. The food is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4.4-5)
- From *charis* we also get *charisma*, used of the gifts of God. These gifts are a result of grace and really could be called the Gifts of Grace - 1 Corinthians 1.4-7 (see Amplified). These verses tell us that whoever has grace is not lacking in any gift.

### Psalm 84.11

- Grace comes from God.
- Grace does not withhold any good thing from the upright.
- C H Spurgeon writes in *The Treasury of David*, “*Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant blessing to us.*”

We receive the Grace of God through Jesus

- The grace of God was upon Jesus - Luke 2.40, 52
- Jesus was full of grace - John 1.14-17
- We are only the beneficiaries of grace because of Jesus and His death on the cross - Romans 5.15-19  
'free gift' is the Gk word *charisma*.

The riches of God's grace is exhibited in His kindness towards us in Christ – Ephesians 2.7-8

- God will make known to us the exceeding greatness of the riches (or fullness) of His grace
- We put our faith in Him and by His grace He has saved us.
- We did and can do nothing worthy or deserving of salvation, we received it as a free gift of His grace.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Grace – Hebrews 10.29, Zechariah 12.10

- The Divine executive, the One who imparts grace to the people of God. (Ephesians 4.29-30). We are to minister grace through edifying speech – this means that we speak blessing and edification so that the Holy Spirit can impart grace to the hearers.

God's throne is the Throne of Grace – Hebrews 4.16 and is where we find grace to help in our times of need.

- Not everybody could approach the throne and petition the king – it required an invitation. See Esther 5.1-3

- We are encouraged to come boldly, without fear, to God and ask for grace to help and aid us in our times of need.

## **2. Grace To Help In Times of Trial**

Last week we started a new topic looking at the outworking of grace in our lives and how we can experience and know 'Times of Greater Grace'. In a word that the Lord spoke to me at the end of last year, He said that this year would be a time of greater manifestations of His love, grace and power.

The early church had this experience in Acts 4

*“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And **great grace** was upon them all.”*

Last time we were looking at the Biblical definition of grace?

- The English word grace appears 170 times in the AV
- The most common Greek word for grace, *charis*, means 'good-will, loving-kindness, favour, pleasure, delight; blessing and reward' It also has the idea of a goodly appearance, beauty. The Hebrew word *chên* means the same – favour, kindness.
- Grace is totally undeserved and unmerited. There is nothing that we can do to earn grace, it is God's favour and good-will towards us that result in manifest blessings.

We receive the Grace of God through Jesus

- The grace of God was upon Jesus - Luke 2.40, 52
- Jesus was full of grace - John 1.14-17
- We are only the beneficiaries of grace because of Jesus and His death on the cross - Romans 5.15-19 (see vs15 in NCV)  
'free gift' is the Gk word *charisma* – which literally means gift of grace

The riches of God's grace is exhibited in His kindness towards us in Christ – Ephesians 2.7-8

- God will make known to us the exceeding greatness of the riches (or fullness) of His grace
- We put our faith in Him and by His grace He has saved us.
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### **A. God's throne is the Throne of Grace**

Hebrews 4.16 - it is where we find grace to help in our times of need.

“Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favour 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*].” (Amp)

- (vs15) Jesus is our great High Priest who Himself has been tempted in the same ways as we are, yet He without sin (by yielding to the temptation).
  - 1 John 2.16  
lust of the flesh; lust of the eyes; pride of life
  - Adam's wife and Jesus were both tempted in these ways - Genesis 3.6; Luke 4. 1-13
  - These are the ways we are tempted too - Matthew 18.8-9  
hands (lust/satisfying of the flesh); feet (pride of life – our standing); eye (lust of the eyes)
- He is therefore qualified to sympathise with our weaknesses. He knows how we feel and what we are going through. He is touched with the 'feelings of our infirmities'
- His grace is available to help us when we are in need. In times of need and trial we ought to run to the Throne of Grace (Psalm 91.1-13)

See also **Hebrews 2.16-18**

- Not everybody could approach the throne and petition the king – it required an invitation. See Esther 5.1-3
- We are encouraged to come boldly, without fear, to God and ask for grace to help and aid us in our times of need.
- Often we ask for things that we think we need rather than what we actually need. James 4.3, *amiss* = badly

### **3. Grace To Help In Times of Trial – Pt. 2**

*“And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And **great grace** was upon them all.”*

Last time we saw that at the Throne of Grace is the place where we can find grace to help in our times of need (Hebrews 4.16)

“Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favour 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*].” (Amp)

We can approach the Throne of Grace boldly knowing that

- Jesus has been tempted in the same ways as we are, yet He without sin (by yielding to the temptation)
- He is therefore qualified to sympathise with our weaknesses. He knows how we feel and what we are going through. He is touched with the 'feelings of our infirmities'

- Hebrews 2.16-18
- without fear, we can ask for grace to help and aid us in our times of need
- we need grace in our times of need, not things

#### James 4.3

- Often we ask for things that we think we need rather than what we actually need. James 4.3, amiss = badly

#### Acts 4.33

The early church were experiencing a trial of their faith:

- Peter & John ministered healing to the man at the beautiful gate (Acts 3.1-10)
  - the man at the beautiful gate asked for what he thought he needed – money; what he actually needed was the grace of God which ministered healing to his body
- Peter (and presumably John as well) preached a powerful sermon (Acts 3.11-26) which resulted in an additional 5000 people being born again (Acts 4.4).
- The priests, captain of the Temple and Saducees had them arrested for preaching and teaching the resurrection. (Acts 4.1-3) - Saducees do not believe in the resurrection (Matthew 22.23, Luke 20.27), they deny the existence of angels (Acts 23.8) and the oral law as revelation from God.
- they were imprisoned (Acts 4.3)
- were threatened not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4.17-18, 21)
- prayed about the situation – they came to the Throne of Grace (Acts 4.23-31)
- they continued to give witness to Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 4.33)
- great grace was upon them - they received times of greater grace – manifestations of power and blessings.

**Grace will lift you up**, it will exalt you:

Look at what the Scripture says in Acts 4.13-14

*“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marvelled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it”*

There was little this religious council could do – there was something in and on the apostles that set them above – grace.

- God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3.34; James 4.6; 1 Peter 5.5)

The grace of God will lift us out of our times of trial and need and give us a means of escape and relief

#### 1 Corinthians 10.13

*“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

- God will not allow the trial or temptation to be beyond what we can bear.

- He gives us His grace – our means of escape, so that we can bear it and overcome it.

Ezra 9.8

*“And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage”*

- Grace was shown by God to bring hope and revival to those in bondage and need

#### **4. The All-Sufficiency of Grace**

In our sessions over the last few Sunday evenings, we have seen how we can find mercy and grace to help us in our times of need at the Throne of Grace (Hebrews 4.16). In this teaching I want to build on that thought and look at the all-sufficiency of grace for our times of trial.

- In the teaching last time we saw that the early church were going through a time of trial that resulted in them being threatened and forbidden to preach and teach in the name of Jesus.
- Rather than heeding to their threats and listening to those authorities that were trying to discredit the work of God – we see the church go straight to prayer (Acts 4.24-31) asking that God would grant them the boldness to speak His Word.
- They ran to the Throne of Grace and petitioned the Father – the result was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon them and they received the boldness they needed to proclaim the word of God. As they boldly preached the word something happened – great grace came upon them (Acts 4.33)

In their time of trial and need they went to the Throne of Grace where they found mercy and grace to help them in that time of need. Grace will lift us up, it is all that we need.

- We also mentioned the paralysed man who was laid at the Beautiful gate of the temple daily to beg money from those who were going there to pray.
- He was the reason the apostles Peter and John were arrested – they ministered to him and he was healed in the name of Jesus.
- This miracle caused a big shaking up in Jerusalem that the authorities took note and couldn't deny (Acts 4.14-16).
- This paralysed man asked for what he thought he needed – money to feed his family.
- God knew what he really needed – the grace of God was poured out on him and he received his healing, he no longer had to beg he could work.

When we go through trials and tests God has given us the means of escape (1 Corinthians 10.13) – His grace. He has already given us His grace so that we can bear the trials and overcome.

All that we need for salvation has already been given to us – Jesus does not need to die again for us. It is already done, the price has already been paid – all we need to do is receive the grace of God through faith.

It is the same for the trials that we go through, all that Jesus IS GOING TO DO for us has ALREADY BEEN DONE – all we need to do is receive the grace of God through faith.

Paul had first hand experience of this. He bore the battle scars as a servant of God, but found the power of God's grace to be His help and strength.

## 2 Corinthians 12.7-10

*“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 on me.. for when I am weak, then I am strong” (vs 9-10)*

Let us look at these verses and see what he went through:

- Paul was receiving many and amazing revelations from God, which we now have as the NT, the revelations could have made him proud and have feelings of grandeur and importance.
- This 'thorn in the flesh' was not an affliction to keep Paul humble – it was a 'messenger of satan to buffet' him
  - the devil came at him to attack him and bring him down (lest he be exalted).
  - to get him to focus on himself and not in the Lord – to puff him up with pride
  - The word buffet means to 'strike with the fist, maltreat and violently abuse'
- Three times Paul pleaded with God to take it away – but God didn't
- God's reply to Paul's pleadings were “My grace is sufficient for you” - grace was all he needed to lift him up.
  - “My grace is sufficient for you” - all that I will do has already been done
  - we don't need to beg and plead with God for things He has already given to us. We just need to receive them by faith.
- “My strength is made perfect in weakness” - When we need it most we find God's power is at its most effective.
  - The words '*made perfect*' have the understanding of being 'complete, completeness; to be at its most effective; to bring to an end'
  - By the grace of God, His strength brings to an end our weakness.
- Because of the grace of God, Paul could declare “when I am weak, then I am strong”.
  - Grace lifted him from a time of weakness to a time of strength.
  - So Paul could say here that he will glory in troubles and afflictions, not because they bring him down and weary him, but rather that he knows that it is an opportunity for the grace of God to be manifest in his life

Writing to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 3.13-16, he says to them: *“don't lose heart, don't faint or be wearied or quit because of tribulation and affliction, I'm praying that you will be strengthened with might in the inner man by the Spirit of God (who is the Spirit of Grace [Hebrews 10.29; Zechariah 12.10])”* (my paraphrase)

## **5. The Exalting Nature of Grace**

In the last lesson we saw that Grace is all sufficient for every trial and test we face:

*“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 on me.. for when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12. 9-10)*

All that Jesus IS GOING TO DO for us has ALREADY BEEN DONE – all we need to do is receive the grace of God through faith.

Paul was going through a trial and test when these words were given to him by Jesus, “My grace is sufficient for you...”

- God's reply to Paul's pleadings to remove this from him were “My grace is sufficient for you” - grace was all he needed to lift him up.
  - “My grace is sufficient for you” - all that I will do has already been done - we just need to receive His grace by faith.
- “My strength is made perfect in weakness” - When we need it most we find God's power is at its most effective
  - The phrase '*made perfect*' has the understanding of being 'complete, completeness; to be at its most effective; to bring to an end/conclusion'
  - By the grace of God, His strength is at it's most effective to bring to an end our weakness.
- Because of the grace of God, Paul could declare “when I am weak, then I am strong”.
  - Grace lifted him from a time of weakness to a time of strength.
  - So Paul could say here that he will glory in troubles and afflictions, not because they brought him down and wearied him, but rather that he knew that it was an opportunity for the grace of God to be manifest in his life

This is where I want to pick up the teaching for this lesson, looking at the nature of grace that exalts us and lifts us up.

### **1 Peter 5.5-6 and James 4.10**

Both these verses tell us to humble ourselves under God and He will exalt us and lift us up.

We have just read in 1 Peter 5.5 and we see it again in James 4.6 that “God gives grace to the humble” - It is the *grace of God* that exalts us and lifts us to a higher level, above the storms and trials of life.

When we take-off in an aircraft on a really stormy day with black clouds and torrential rain, the forces of thrust and lift working with the plan cause us to rise above and beyond the clouds and storm. Soon we are under the blue sunny skies looking down on the storm clouds but they no longer have any effect on us.

That's how grace works – in cooperation with God when we humble ourselves, the grace causes us to rise to a higher level.

Let us remind ourselves of what grace is:

Grace (Gk *charis*.) - “endue with favour, kindness, goodness and blessing”.

- It is an attribute of God;
- An outworking of God's love toward us
- It is the free and unmerited gift of God.
- It is the blessing of God

Let us look at verses 1 Peter 5.8-12

Here the apostle exhorts us to not only to be humble under God, but that we should be aware and alert of the schemes of the devil and resist him (v8-9). He goes on to say that God is the God of all grace and by that outworking of grace in our lives He will perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you.

In verse 12, Peter confirms that what he had just declared to them was the same message of grace which Paul had preached to them. (see also 2 Peter 3.14-18)

Let us briefly then look at some of Paul's teachings on this message of grace. We will probably look at these again in future weeks.

### **Ephesians 2.4-8 (Amp)**

- We are saved by the grace of God
- The grace of God has quickened us though we were dead in trespasses and sins – it has raised us to newness of life
- The grace of God has raised us up and made us sit together in the heavenly places
- The grace of God lifted us from one level to another – as the Psalmist could say *“He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps”* (Psalm 40.2)

### **Acts 20.32**

- In Ephesus Paul was teaching the disciples that after his departure they would face trials – wolves coming into their midst to distract, deceive and draw them away from the truth. (vs29-31)
- He commends them to God and the word of God's grace
- God's grace was sufficient to keep them and give them strength
- God's grace would build them up and give them an inheritance – God's grace would raise them up

*“Now I am putting you in the care of God and the message about His grace. It is able to give you strength, and it will give you the blessings God has for all His holy people”* (NCV)

### **2 Corinthians 8.9**

- He became poor so that we might become rich

- This verse tells us that Jesus humbled himself so that we could be exalted by His grace - the grace of God.
- Jesus laid aside everything (*became poor*), His Deity, his reputation, his stately form and became as a man, so that we could be beneficiaries (*become rich*) of grace – favour, kindness, goodness and the blessing of God

## **2 Corinthians 9.7-10**

- Purposeful & bountiful giving is honouring God with your substance – act of worship, also humbling yourself to God.
- God is able to make all grace [all favour, all kindness, all goodness, all blessing] abound toward you.
- That you might abound - to cause to overflow, exceed, excel, be pre-eminent – to cause to rise above and beyond.
- This type of giving causes the grace of God to go to work on your behalf increasing and blessing you – raising you up to a new level

## **6. Grace Aboundeth More**

### **2 Corinthians 9.7-10**

Last week we finished off looking at these verses.

- Purposeful & bountiful giving is honouring God with your substance, what you have – it is an act of worship, which is humbling yourself under God.
- God is able to make all grace [all favour, all kindness, all goodness, all blessing] abound toward you.
- That you might abound - to cause to overflow, exceed, excel, be pre-eminent – to cause to rise above and beyond.
- This type of giving causes the grace of God to go to work on your behalf increasing and blessing you – raising you up to a new level

I want to develop this a little bit further this week by looking at the statement found in vs8 “and God is able to make all grace abound towards you..”

This word *abound* in the Greek means:

- 'to superabound, be in excess, to be superfluous, to have enough and to spare' (James Strong).
- Another Greek scholar, Joseph H Thayer, defines it as 'to excel, exceed, overflow, greater measure'
- William E.Vine says 'above the ordinary'
- and Dr Spiros Zodhiates says 'have more than enough'

God causes His grace [His favour, kindness, goodness, and blessing] to come to us in a greater measure, to have enough and to spare and cause us to overflow.

Listen to some of the other translations of this verse:

*“And God is able to make all grace (every favor and earthly blessing) come to you in abundance” (Amplified)*

*“God can give you more than you ever need” (J B Phillips)*

*“And God will generously provide all you need” (New Living Translation)*

*“And God can give you more blessings than you need” (New Century Version)*

*“God can give you all you need. He will give you more than enough.” (New Life Version)*

*“And God is able to bless you abundantly” (Today's New International Version)*

*“It is in God's power to provide you richly with every good gift” (New English Bible)*

*“And God is able to give you all grace in full measure” (Bible in Basic English)*

*“And God is able to bestow every blessing on you in abundance” (Weymouth)*

*“Besides, God will give you his constantly overflowing kindness” (God's Word)*

*“Besides, God is able to make every blessing of yours overflow for you” (International Standard Version)*

*“And God is able to give you an overflowing measure of all good gifts” (Conybeare, Epistles of Paul)*

*“Moreover, God is powerful to make every grace superabound to you” (Wuest)*

*“God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways” (The Message)*

*“God has power to shower all kinds of blessings upon you” (Twentieth Century New Testament)*

It is this theme of abundant grace, this overflowing measure of grace, that I want us to look at this week.

As we have just read in the various translations:

Our giving to God, of our money, time, talents, worship enables God to make (or cause) His grace to abound towards us – that is God pours out His favour and blessings on us in an overflowing measure

- Yes He wants to bless us
- Yes He wants to meet our needs
- Yes He wants to give us more than we need
- But He gives us more than we need for a purpose – to be a blessing to others.

***What is overflow?*** Picture an empty cup, now see it being filled with liquid (tea/coffee/water), now see what happens when the cup gets filled but the liquid is still pouring into it – it overflows, everything around the cup gets to 'taste' the overflowing liquid.

Look again at verse 9

“*And God is able to make all grace abound towards you..*” - God pours out His grace (favour and blessings) in abundance (overflowing manner)

“*...that you, always having all sufficiency in all things...*” - so that you may have all that you need.

“*...may have an abundance for every good work*” - and more than you need so that you can be a blessing

It says the same things in verses 11 & 12

God blesses and favours us so that we can be a blessing, be liberal and generous, meeting the needs of the saints – that's the abundant nature of grace. God gives it to us so that we can overflow.

We see this same overflow of grace in Romans 5, but from a different angle -

### **Romans 5.12-21**

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more” (v20)

“*But then Law came in, [only] to expand and increase the trespass [making it more apparent and exciting opposition]. But where sin increased and abounded, grace (God's unmerited favor) has surpassed it and increased the more and superabounded*” (Amplified)

Where sin increases and overflows we have an even greater measure of grace to cause us to triumph over sin.

In this chapter we read of two men – one brought us into sin, the other brought us into grace.

- (vs12-14) Through Adam sin entered the world and death with it.
  - Sin and death spread to all men (it abounded to all).
  - Sin reigned until the time of Moses when the law was given, but until the law sin was not imputed to men (men were not charged with sin because there was no law for them to break). Without the law there was no conviction of sin and therefore no need for redemption, or a Saviour.
  - The law added because of sin (see Galatians 3.19 (Amp)) until Jesus, the Saviour and Redeemer, would come – He would bring in the time of grace.
- (vs15) Through Jesus the free gift (*charisma* - the gift of grace) abounded to many resulting in life and victory over sin and death.
  - John in his gospel tells us 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ' (John 1.17).
  - In Christ Jesus we are no longer under the law (and it's condemnation) but under grace (Romans 6.14).

Mighty as sin is, the grace of God is mightier still. If we look at sin by itself it would appear that it is unconquerable, with no one able to escape it's grip and power. But when the grace of God comes alongside we see how easily the power of sin is overcome and done away with

- **Sin brought condemnation but grace brings pardon** (vs16-18)
  - The soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18. 4,20; Romans 6.23).
  - The one that broke the Law was condemned, judged guilty
  - There is now no condemnation in Christ Jesus - (Romans 8.1)
  - Moses prayed that 'grace' would pardon his iniquity - (Exodus 34.9)
  - Grace and mercy triumph over the guilt of sin (vs18)
- **Sin brought sinfulness but grace brings righteousness** (vs19)
  - The sin that the one (Adam) sinned resulted in a lifestyle of sin. This sinful nature perpetuated to every human being.
  - All are born into sin and are sinful by nature (Romans 3.23)
  - Grace makes the Divine Exchange – (2 Corinthians 5.21). The One (Jesus) became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God.
- **Sin brought death but grace brings life** (vs21)
  - Sin produces death – (James 1.15)
  - The wages of sin is death, but God's free gift is eternal life through Jesus (Romans 6.23)
  - Jesus (the personification of grace) came to give us abundant, abounding life (John 10.10)

## **7. Grace: An Anchor of Hope for Our Soul**

Over the last few lessons we have been looking at various aspects of grace. We have already seen

- What grace is
- We have grace to help us in our times of need
- Grace is all sufficient for every trial
- It will exalt us and raise us up
- It is abounding in measure to conquer sin.

This brings us to another aspect of grace, which we are going to study in this teaching - it gives us hope for the future. Grace is an anchor of hope for our soul.

An anchor secures a vessel so that it is not tossed about by the waves. Grace is given to us by the Lord and secures our position. Last week we saw three characteristics of abounding grace that secure our position in Christ.

- Sin brought condemnation but grace brings pardon
- Sin brought a life of sinfulness but grace brings righteousness
- Sin brought death but grace brings life

### **2 Thessalonians 2.15-16**

“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given *us* everlasting consolation and good hope by grace ”

This verse tells us that grace gives us good hope. We are to stand strong and keep the faith (standing on the traditions (teachings) of the word – the message proclaimed and written word). While we are standing strong His grace will come and give us hope. It is an anchor for our soul

Bible hope is more than just wishing for or desiring something. Unlike English where we use it in this very weakened form, the hope that we read of in the Scriptures is a strong 'confident expectation', it is akin to faith, they go together and have been called 'the power twins'

### **Romans 4.16-22**

Grace gave Abraham hope for the future – this whole chapter is dealing with the subject of grace, hope and faith in the life of Abraham.

This grace that Abraham received enabled him to stand in faith for the promise. It was his anchor that God would perform what He had promised him. Abraham did not waver through unbelief (v20), he did not stagger at the promise but was fully convinced (v21) that God would keep His promise even when in the natural everything was against him (v18).

He took his stand on the word of promise, he believed what God said and grace gave him the hope to anchor in to what God had said until he received the promise of God.

### **Romans 5.1-5**

Paul goes on to say that like Abraham we too are justified by faith and we have access by faith into this same grace – grace that gives us hope and a reason to rejoice. We have a great future. We began this year by saying that this is the year of the greater – we can see and do greater things because of the grace that God has given us. The grace that gives us hope to stand on the promises of God and anchor into them. This hope does not disappoint – what we hope for we shall certainly obtain (see Philippians 1.20)

Paul goes on to develop this theme by saying that we will be saved from wrath through Jesus, and he also goes on to the things we were looking at last week – where sin abounded, grace abounded more!

### **Titus 3.7**

Paul writes in his letter to Titus that this grace and hope makes us heirs of eternal life. We have a glorious future, we are inheritors of eternal life, heirs of God, joint heirs with Jesus (Romans 8.17) because of grace. Grace gives us an anchor for our salvation - see Titus 2.11-14

### **Ezra 9.8**

“And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage”

Ezra recounts how God had dealt with them

- God gave grace to His people while in captivity. They had forsaken the commandments and laws of God – and as God had said previously, they were taken out of their land.
- The 'peg in His holy place' was the remnant of people that hadn't been taken into captivity but left in Jerusalem. Grace was at work here to give them hope. The picture/allusion here is of a tent peg which anchors the tent to the ground.
- This grace brought them hope that God would visit and revive them in their time of bondage and bring them back to their own land.
- God eventually brought them back (vs9)

## **8. Grow In Grace**

We will conclude this topic of grace by studying one more aspect – growing and continuing in grace. Like love, faith, salvation and everything else we must develop and grow in grace and continue in it.

### **2 Peter 3.18**

“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever”

The work of grace is gradual, like natural growth; we must grow up in to it .

- We do that simply by walking with God and being obedient to Him, doing what He asks us to do through His word.
- A newborn baby requires milk in order for it to grow, in the same way it is the Word that causes growth in our lives, not just by hearing it but practising it as well.

1 Peter 2.2 - *“as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby”*

Paul urged and encouraged the believers in Antioch (in Pisidia) to continue in the grace of God. They responded by coming together to hear the word of the Lord

Acts 13.43-44

*“Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God”*

But as we have just seen, it is not enough just to hear the word, it needs accompanying works, in this case walking with God in obedience.

Jesus needed to grow up into the things of God too. He was born as a man, He suffered temptations and needed to train His flesh nature to live in accordance to the way of the Spirit of God. He is our example:

Luke 2.51-52

Jesus, in obedience, increased (grew) in wisdom, stature and in favour with God and men. This word favour is the Gk word *charis* = grace. Jesus continued and grew not

just in wisdom and stature (maturity) but also in grace with God – He walked with God in obedience.

Let us look at a man in the Bible who grew in grace by walking with God and continuing to be obedient to the Word of God.

## Noah – Genesis 6.9

We know nothing of Noah's early life, the first time he is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 5.29-32

- Noah was son of Lamech and great-grandson of Enoch
- Apart from v29 which tells us he was born, we first read of Noah when he was 500 years old (v32)
- Noah was father to Shem, Ham and Japheth.
- His name means 'rest, comfort and consolation'.
- Noah is a type of Christ -
  - (a) It was said of Noah that he would bring comfort, consolation and rest – He would be the saviour of his time.
  - (b) Jesus call to all men was 'come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11.28).
  - (c) any man that trusted in the Ark [*God's means of salvation*] and got on board was saved from the judgement of God, any man that trusts in Jesus will also be saved.

Going on into chapter 6 we read concerning Noah -

- He lived in a time where the world was evil, corrupt and morally dark (vs1-7)
- **Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.** This is the first mention of grace in the Bible. This word grace as it is used here means 'to be accepted, favoured, to bestow kindness and mercy'.
  - (a) When all other men were only continually evil, God found in Noah a man that pleased Him, a man whom He could use and God accepted Him, he bestowed His mercy to him. 2 Corinthians 5.9, "*Therefore, we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him*" - the AV says "...we may be accepted of Him".
  - (b) God searched for a man and found one that He could use – God looks for those who have a heart for Him, those whom He can use to accomplish His purpose and plan.
  - (c) Noah was a man of faith - faith pleases God (Hebrews 11.6), Noah is found among the names mentioned in the record of faith in Hebrews 11.
- **He was a just man**, perfect in his generations – He was a man of integrity and truth; he was blameless and righteous, not in his own merit, grace was at work in his life. This perfected him and it was accounted to him as righteousness (Hebrews 11.7), he became "*heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*"
- **He walked with God** – like his great-grandfather Enoch before him he had an intimate relationship with God. God revealed to him what He was about to do. God reveals His plans to His servants the prophets (Amos 3.7), not for their sole benefit but that they might be the vessels through which the grace of God is extended.
- **He was obedient** to the call of God (v22). Noah did what God put on his heart, even though it was a long and difficult task, and suffering ridicule. He did this out

of 'godly fear', reverence for God, it was an act of his love and worship for God, he put all he had into that work.

- **Noah was a preacher of righteousness** to his generation (2 Peter 2.5) – warning them of the impending judgement, and pleading with them to 'repent and be saved'

Noah was a man that was submissive and obedient to God. He walked in the ways of God. He found grace in the eyes of the Lord – and that grace lifted him up.

God used this humble man Noah as a saviour for his generation.

- At 600 years old, Noah and his family entered the Ark that he had prepared and God shut the door.
- He had preached and been faithful to the call of God for up to 100 years.
- The grace of God saved him and his family and **lifted** them up on the flood waters (Genesis 7.11-17)

After the flood had subsided, God honours Noah with an everlasting covenant – still in force today Genesis 9.11-17

- God promises never again to destroy all flesh by the flood.
- The rainbow is the sign of the covenant.
- Every-time the rainbow appears in the clouds, God remembers Noah. He remembers His covenant with a man that walked with Him and found grace in His eyes – will we find grace in His eyes?

If we want to see greater things, we need to allow the grace of God to grow and work in us as it did in the life of Noah.

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*For a free audio mp3 of this teaching and others, please visit the ministry web-site of Peter Warren at [www.voice-faith.com](http://www.voice-faith.com) and connect with us on Facebook (Voice of Faith Ministries International) and Twitter (@VOF\_Ministries)*