

Amazing Grace – 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Next Tuesday I go to the eye surgeon for a pre-op visit to prepare for an eye operation. I don't expect it to be anything but successful, but I got to thinking, suppose it didn't turn out right and I was blinded in that eye? What impact would that have on my life, and the ones around me?

The first thing I thought about is that I could not pastor a church for I could no longer drive. This would mean I couldn't visit the sick, go to the hospitals, or even drive to church. It also means I wouldn't be able to prepare Bible Studies, research for sermons, or even get into the pulpit by myself. The very thought of it is devastating.

How would I get around? I certainly couldn't train Pippi as a seeing eye dog. She is almost blind herself. Besides that she is too stupid. I suppose I can train Claudia to be a seeing eye wife. She'd do better than Pippi anyway; after all she can talk better, and don't scratch nearly as much.

But I also thought that a person does not have to have physical sight to serve God. Look at the ministry of Fanny Crosby. The world of Christian music would never have reached the pinnacle it did, and her songs still enlighten and inspire us today.

She seemed to reach beyond the visual realm of this earth and saw things of God that most mortals will never see. If she had had perfect sight, we would probably never have had such songs as:

Pass me not o gentle saviour

All the way my saviour leads me

To God be the glory

And virtually thousands of others that we would have never had; and the Christian world would have suffered greatly without these. Blindness did not seem to stifle her creativity but seemed to instead sharpen her spiritual senses in that she stayed focused on God.

My thoughts then zeroed in on the fact that the things she could see were much greater than most of us will ever experience. She had spiritual sight that most will never be able to achieve on this earth, and she visualized more about God and Jesus than anyone with 20/20 eyesight could ever see.

You see, spiritual sight is much more important than physical sight to God, so if I should come up blind, what would I do?

Paul had to face this same dilemma. We read in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

9 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.

Here is the cry of all who understand the power of God. It is thought that Paul had a serious eye problem. He needed his eyesight desperately to go about his mission to spread the Gospel, but God said NO!

Why did God not heal Paul's thorn in the flesh? Why did Paul have to struggle with this problem, for it is obvious that he could have done a much better job if he was healed. Again, God proved He was wiser than man when He said, "**My grace is sufficient.**"

As I studied this Scripture I began to zero in on the wondrous grace of God. It is grace and grace alone that gives us hope and assurance. It is grace and grace alone that brings salvation and God's promise of life hereafter. And it is God's grace and grace alone that sees us through the tough times of life. With all this working for me, I have no need to fear.

John Newton came to understand the power of Grace in his life and it inspired him to pen the immortal words to the song we know as Amazing Grace. Even though this song was written many years ago, it has stood up under the test of time and its message is just as valid in our contemporary world as it was when it was written over 250 years ago.

This morning I want to look at the verses of Amazing Grace as John Newton wrote them, and try to get a feeling for how he understood the message, and see if it will help us understand the real meaning of the Grace of God.

This first verse captures the wondrous nature of God by the simple title "**Amazing Grace.**" It is amazing that God would even think of loving us sinful creature. We have resisted Him, cursed Him, denied Him, killed His Son, and still we are recipients of His amazing Grace.

The thought is captured and the promise is confirmed in this first verse.

**Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me....
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.**

Just as it says in **Romans 5:19-21:**

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:

21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

WHERE SIN ABOUNDED, GRACE DID MUCH MORE ABOUND:

Isn't that just like God? He takes the bad, and makes it good.

The saving power of His grace is phenomenal in that He provided a way for lost sinners to become the children of God. All of us who are saved were lost in our sins, bound for hell, but He gave us spiritual eyesight so that we could recognize our lost condition, realize we stood before Him as a lost miserable sinner, and presented His Son as our Saviour. This is just a small sample of God's grace.

John Newton accepted this as he wrote:

**T'was Grace that taught...
my heart to fear.
And Grace, my fears relieved.
How precious did that Grace appear...
the hour I first believed.**

It was grace that convicted us, it was grace that taught us about the judgment of God, and it was grace that allowed our hearts to understand that only God can relieve the fears of a lost soul.

The Bible says in Ephesians 2:8-9:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

The preciousness of this becomes clear immediately when one fully accepts Jesus as his personal saviour.

This moment is called being born again.

For God so loved the world that He bestowed His grace upon ever person who would accept His way of salvation. All it takes is faith, repentance, and spiritual regeneration. This is God's grace and it is available to all mankind.

After salvation grace becomes active in the life of the believer. Some in the modern day world of evangelism seem to think that along with this come health, wealth, and healing.

However God knows that giving man physical health does not strengthen him spiritual but has the opposite effect. He will use his physical prowess to impress the world and not do God's work.

Even though God may allow some to become wealthy there are few that can handle the temptations money brings. God will bless those who have money as long as they use it rightly to glorify Him.

God even heals some, but not all. Have you ever wondered why? I think it is because we want to be healed for the wrong reasons. How many sick people do you know who pray to be healed so they can work harder to glorify God?

You see even our earthy blessing must be tied into glorifying God. This is the only thing God recognizes and the only kind of atmosphere grace operates in.

But what we do and how we act has nothing on the the way God dispenses His Grace. John recognized this in the second verse.

**Through many dangers, toils and snares...
we have already come.
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far...
and Grace will lead us home.**

Hebrews 4:14-16

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

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

John Newton fully understood the dangers and snares of life, and the disaster life itself brings to the unsaved. The only solution to this is understood as the grace of God . Not that God will keep us free from all problems of life, but will give us the grace to see them through.

How many of you have had similar hard times that seemed overbearing and impossible to deal with, but you turned to the One who can help you through all things?

When Jesus rebuked the demon in the young man, He said in Mark 9:23, “ **If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.**”

It is promises like this that gets us through the bad times and leads us into good as Newton expressed in the next verse:

**The Lord has promised good to me...
His word my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be...
as long as life endures.**

The promise of goodness from God is in His Word. The Bible says in Romans 8:28-31:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

All things include daily living, our jobs, our travels, our vacations, our marriages, our friends, and even our thoughts and actions.

I know some of you are thinking things haven't worked out for me for the good. If not, then you missed the major part of this Scripture for it says "**them who are the called according to his purpose.**"

Things didn't work out for you because you were doing them in a worldly sense and not in the will of God. This Scripture doesn't mean that we're to strive of make the world think highly of you; it means the Goodness as measured by God is when one is obedient and seeing His favor.

I'm afraid most of us want to bargain with God about what He wants us to do. We preachers look at other preachers who seem to be so successful. They have big churches, large congregations, and bountiful offerings. Things just seem to be going so smoothly for them, and we ask, "**God why don't you do that for me?**"

He answered this while He walked on this earth when the Apostles were displeased about John's role when the word got around that he would live until Jesus returned. Jesus said to Peter in John 21:22: "**If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.**"

His message is still the same, we are to do the job He gives us not be caught up in the worldly way of "**who is getting the best deal.**" God doesn't let the world determine how He is giving out His assignments, and He never gives the hard jobs to those who can't do them. He saves them for those He knows will see them through.

The world would say that things didn't work out so well for the early Christians as they were tortured and put to death. But without those sacrifices we wouldn't have Christianity today. It was for God's purpose and it all worked out for the good.

When you get to heaven ask any one of the martyrs if they thought it worked out for the good? You already know what their answers will be. **“Yes, a thousand times yes, and I’d gladly do it over if I could.”**

You see, when we use God’s measuring stick, things take on a different perspective.

The issue is not how you feel about goodness, but how God feels, and His approval comes only when we have done our best under any and all circumstances.

And in our song we get a glimpse of the rewards for our faith good works we do here on earth as it reads:

**When we've been there ten thousand years...
bright shining as the sun.
We've no less days to sing God's praise...
then when we've first begun.**

Eternity is the theme in this verse. It uses ten thousand years because man cannot think in terms of eternity. He has to think of time in terms of hours, days and, years. But there will be no clocks in heaven. Even after ten thousand years, we won’t be changed in the least. This is what grace did for John Newton, and it is what grace still does for us today.

You can plainly see that there is something worse than physical blindness, which ends at physical death, for there is spiritual blindness that lasts for all eternity, and except for the grace of God we are all blind.

John Newton’s words still ring out across the centuries, and the words are just as meaningful today as they were then. God’s grace is the timeless factor for all generations, and it’s saving power has not diminished on iota.

No wonder John Newton called it Amazing Grace. It is music to our hearts and is the healing balm applied to our souls that gives us the spiritual eyesight we need to see God.

**Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me....
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now, I see.**

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