

Ephesians 2:8,9 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Last week we looked at the amazing depth, richness, and power of His forgiveness in our lives. Today we see that Paul segues into the Grace of God. The Forgiveness of God and the Grace of God work in harmony with one another in our lives for powerful eternal purposes.

There are many definitions of grace; one is, “unmerited favor” another one is, “The power to know and obey God’s will.” My working definition is, “Anything God uses in our lives to get us from point A to point B in our journey with Jesus.”

We know for sure that God has given us all Grace. We need His Grace in order to become born-again. His Grace is manifested in all of our lives a little differently based on how He wired us and the gifts He’s placed in our lives. God wants each of us to exercise our gifts. It’s not specifically stated here, but I’ve seen spiritual atrophy develop in people’s lives who don’t exercise their gifts just like muscular atrophy develops when we don’t exercise or use our muscles. The muscles are still there, but they are weak and ineffective. I want His Grace and subsequent gifts in my life to become stronger and more effective as I exercise them for His Kingdom.

Romans 12:6-8 says, *“Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.”*

Acts 20:32 says, *“And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.”*

Hale Pule Question:

Based on what we’ve talked about so far, how do you recognize and how would you describe the Grace of God in your life?

Let’s take some time to look at God’s grace as a very practical part of God’s relationship with us.

God’s grace is an intricate part of His will for our lives. We are nothing without His grace. We have no purpose without His grace. His grace has a deep and lasting effect in our lives. Paul understands the delicate balance of our responsibility as Jesus Followers to work hard at obeying God’s will for our lives while realizing that our hard work and faithfulness is nothing without God’s grace.

1 Corinthians 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*

The real power of our Christian life comes as we obey God's will. Often God's will is clearly stated in His word and very obvious. Sometimes it's a challenge to know God's will. Other times, we know His will but are hesitant to obey it. How do we learn to discern His will and obey Him? God gives us His grace to help.

Hebrews 4:15-16 *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

As we walk down the path of life, we occasionally find it challenging to walk in sincerity and holiness. Circumstances can arise at work, in our families and friends that can put us in awkward situations. Sometimes there are occasions when we have to make split second decisions concerning the "gray areas" of life. If we rely on worldly wisdom, we will grow more confused and frustrated. As we live through God's grace even the "gray areas" will become clearer and more focused.

2 Corinthians 1:12 *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.*

As we mature in the Lord, we desire to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives. There are many ways that people try to achieve this goal. If we try to achieve this goal in our own strength and understanding, exercising our own willpower and self-discipline, we can become legalistic and like those Paul described to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:2-5—having a form of godliness but denying it's power. If we strive to meet this goal with God's grace as our motivating force, we can overcome sin and obey Him.

Titus 2:11,12 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

Hale Pule Question:

How have you seen God's Grace in your life in some of the practical ways we just talked about? In what areas, that we just talked about, would you like to see more of a practical impact of God's Grace in your life?

If we walk in ignorance, rebellion and/or disobedience we are not taking advantage of the grace God has given us to be victorious in Him. We all receive God's grace, but if we don't take advantage of it, we have received it in vain.

2 Corinthians 6:1 *As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.*

Even though God's grace is available to us, we can still miss it if we walk in selfishness and disobedience. God's grace is available to us in any and every situation we face (2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.") but if we miss it then we can't take advantage of His amazing grace.

Hebrews 12:15 *See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.*

Hale Pule Question:

Think about the areas of your life that you mentioned in the last Hale Pule Question: how can you not "miss His grace" or "receive it in vain" in those areas moving forward as you desire to grow in Him?

As we continue on our journeys of Grace, I encourage you to embrace His Grace.

Take the courageous step to let Him work in and through you.

Exercise what He's given you so far so that you don't experience atrophy.

Even in the hard times, run to Him and not from Him.

Remember, His grace is always available to you.