

WORKERS IN THE GRACE OF GOD

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July 20, 2008

INTRODUCTION:

- A. We sometimes sing the song, “Amazing Grace” – Have you heard the story behind the man & the song?**
1. Tell an abbreviated account of John Newton’s life which serves as the background of the song
 2. After 43 years of preaching, and at 82 years of age, Newton said, “My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior.”
 3. His tombstone reads, “John Newton, Clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the faith he had long labored to destroy.”
 4. We can all relate in some way or another to Newton’s story. We all have our pasts and we’ve all experienced God’s grace. Certainly, Newton’s thoughts reflect our own hearts! (read words)
- B. Today we are talking about the subject of “Workers In The Grace Of God”**
1. When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he emphasized God’s grace and appealed to the Corinthians through an appreciation of what God has done for us: **(2 Cor 5:18-21)**
 2. When Newton thought of God’s grace he was driven to be a worker... We see the same thing in Paul. Paul spoke of God’s grace and then said, “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ!”
 3. People who truly understand and appreciate God’s grace will seek to be a worker in God’s grace!
- This isn’t just about teaching the gospel. It involves any way where we can spread abroad the fragrance of the knowledge of God by working in His kingdom! **(2 Cor 2:14-17)**

OUR ROLE AS WORKERS IN THE GRACE OF GOD:

- A. Paul begins by showing that God’s workers are working in God’s grace:**
1. We need to remember that this means that we are working with God: **(2 Cor 6:1)**
 - a. When it comes to the spiritual work we do, it’s a great comfort to remember that we aren’t doing it by ourselves... We work and as we work God is working alongside us!
 - b. Paul had earlier described those who were working as God’s fellow workers **(1 Cor 3:8)**
 - c. It means we don’t get arrogant about my talents and abilities – We’re doing this work by God’s grace and in God’s grace. Our concern is glorifying Him, not ourselves
 2. We’re not just working with God, but we are also working with one another: **(2 Cor 6:1)**
 - a. Working together may emphasize how we’re working together & we’re working with God
 - b. Working together as a church we are pooling together innumerable talents and resources! We fill in each other’s weaknesses with our strengths so we have great potential!
 - c. Paul says that it doesn’t matter who does the planting & who does the watering... our concern is just that we bring glory to God & spread His grace abroad **(1 Cor 3:6-7, 10)**
 - d. As we seek to do work in the local church, cooperation is essential to be effective and productive workers for God! Without strong cooperation, some work may get accomplished, but it won’t be much and it certainly won’t let the grace of God shine!
 3. Since this work is in the realm of God’s grace, we must work with a sense of urgency: **(2 Cor 6:2)**
 - a. Here specifically, Paul is dealing with bringing people to salvation... Is there any more urgent matter than making sure our soul & the souls of others are right with God?
 - b. The time to be workers in God’s grace is NOW! Today is the day of salvation, today is the acceptable time, today is the favorable time... Today is the only day we truly have!

- c. I think the one thing that keeps us from doing more in God's service is procrastination! It's true in all aspects of our lives isn't it? Consider the motivation of Jesus (**John 9:4-5**)
- 4. Since we're working in God's grace, we must be careful not to unnecessarily offend: (**2 Cor 6:3**)
 - a. Remembering our work is about grace, God's workers will go out of their way to make sure they don't put a stumbling block in anyone's path – Stumbling blocks hinder grace!
 - b. We do this by the way we live – Make sure our lives are consistent with the gospel so no one would have the opportunity to reject the gospel based on our words or behavior
 - c. We do this by how we interact with others, becoming all things to all men (**1 Cor 9:22-23**)
 - d. We do this when we give up things that may be lawful to us, to pursue what is profitable to all – So we can save & influence as many lives as possible! (**1 Cor 10:32-33**)

B. Next we learn that workers in God's grace will face problems:

- 1. Paul gives his own life as an example that when you put yourself out there, as a worker in God's grace, you will have to endure problems: (**2 Cor 6:4-5**)
 - a. Paul's wording here is quite interesting isn't it → He is saying to the Corinthians that their commendation was the suffering that they were enduring! It was their introduction to others, it was their stamp of approval, it was their letter of recommendation to all
 - b. All they suffered & the way they endured it was their proof to everyone that they were authentic, sincere, that they meant what they said, & their message truly mattered!
 - c. This list of suffering shows they suffered in every way imaginable! They were burdened, beat physically, went hungry, lost sleep, jailed, troubled, stressed, and so much more
- 2. Satan will make sure that we will not shed the fragrance of the grace of God without struggles:
 - a. He knows that making our life difficult while we are trying to do right often discourages us!
 - b. Sometimes it seems the more work you do, the greater the difficulties you have to face
 - c. What Satan doesn't seem to understand is that when we face struggles, especially while doing God's work, & face them with endurance... God's grace is only magnified more!
- 3. Sometimes our problems will come in the form of opposition from others (**2 Cor 6:8-10**)
 - a. I really think this suffering was the most difficult for Paul... The attacks turned personal!
 - b. He writes about one such personal attack saying people were using the opportunity to teach the gospel as a chance to add to Paul's chains! (**Philippians 1:15-18**)
 - c. Some Paul loved, some he even may have taught the gospel to, some of Jewish brethren whom he had spent so much time with in the past – People turned against him!
 - d. His words, especially toward the end of this, remind me of the last verse of Amazing Grace
- 4. By the world's gauges (money, fame, numbers, men's approval) Paul looked like a failure! But he knew he was a worker of God and that he proclaimed God's grace... That's all that mattered

C. Finally, consider some traits that successful workers in God's grace share:

- 1. A worker in the grace of God is going to pursue godly character in his own life: (**2 Cor 6:6**)
 - a. Stop and think a moment about some of the specific characteristics Paul outlines here:
 - 1) Pure – This means clean, innocent, and unspotted (As gold is free from impurities)
 - 2) Knowledgeable – A good understanding of God's word, able to impart it to others
 - 3) Patient – Long-tempered, longsuffering, slow to react in anger or frustration
 - 4) Kind – Gentle, considerate of others... basically means we are just good to others
 - 5) Loving – Shows a genuine concern for others that actively seeks their good

- b. If we are going to be workers in the grace of God, our character must then be consistent with what God intends for His grace to produce in us. **(Titus 2:11-14)**
 - c. We must never underestimate the value of people being able to SEE us living out the gospel of grace in our lives. Your example is one of the most powerful tools you have
- 2. A worker in the grace of God will be a one who is being led by the Spirit: **(2 Cor 6:6)**
 - a. Two meanings: Either he is led by producing the fruits of the spirit in his life or the message of the Spirit is directing his life – Either way, he’s letting God influence him
 - b. This is like those who were chosen to serve the Grecian widows **(Acts 6:3-5)** – Maybe this refers to the direct operation of the HS. But can’t it be said of us that we are full of the H.S. when we are allowing ourselves be totally guided by what the Spirit says?
 - c. God’s workers have their hearts, minds, & lives open totally to God’s direction. To wholly become what God wants him to be & do what God wants him to do **(Rm 8:13-14, 16)**
- 3. A worker in the grace of God is going to exhibit trust in the power of God’s word: **(2 Cor 6:7)**
- 4. A worker in the grace of God will equip himself with the proper tools: **(2 Cor 6:7)**
 - a. Weapons here means “an implement, utensil, or tool, armor ” – There’s two directions I can take this: Tools to work or weapons to fight with... maybe both are intended
 - b. We keep tools in our hands that will help us in our work in the kingdom of God and we keep weapons to fight against the attacks of Satan – Shows we’re ready to go!
 - c. The main two tools and weapons we have are the word of God & prayer **(Eph 6:17-18)**
 - d. But look again – There’s one in the right and the left hand! This isn’t something we occasionally think about or randomly do. We’re prepared, diligent, & ready to work!
- 5. A worker in the grace of God will be a person who is selfless: **(2 Cor 6:8-10)**
 - a. Paul shows that sometimes things go great but sometimes we have to give up comforts, pleasures, & even personal freedoms for the sake of the gospel and for others
 - b. Throughout this whole section of “opposites” we see a great reflection of Paul’s attitude... Despite all of the difficult things he was subjected to, he was full of hope & purpose!
 - c. Notice how sometimes Paul was treated as though he was poor... But he sought to make other people rich! He was selflessly dedicated to his work & helping other people
 - d. So, workers today, have to learn to put themselves and their desires aside, to serve the Lord and others. God’s workers do it because they want to serve God, they love other people, and they appreciate God’s grace. To them it is worth any sacrifice!

CONCLUSION: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound! When we consider God’s grace it ought to fill our hearts with inspiration to spread that grace & the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere through our service to God!