

INSIGHTS

You Can Access *Greater Grace*

THE APOSTLE PAUL STANDS AS AN EXAMPLE of a man redeemed from sin who, through the power of the Gospel, turned his world “right-side-up.” In his letters, Paul highlights the central message entrusted to him. Each one has the exhortation, “Grace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Grace is one of the most essential subjects in our walk with God. It is central to what God is doing in humanity, yet it is often unclear or overlooked. We may assume everyone understands grace, but that is

BY DR. DENNIS BURKE



LIKE THE FORCE OF GREAT WATERS,
God's grace empowers us to meet every obstacle.

not always true.

There are two aspects of grace we must understand. First, grace is the loving heart of God the Father, which moves Him to love us and lift our lives into His highest and best.

God's grace looks beyond our failures and sees us through the forgiveness made possible by Jesus' sacrifice. Though we could never earn His blessings through our own good works, He freely chooses to bless us.

Second, grace is God's inner strength empowering us to fulfill His will.

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines grace as

"the divine influence of God in the heart and its reflection in the life." Grace is God's ability within you to do what you cannot do on your own. Paul said, "...By the grace of God I am what I am..." (1

Now, with
boldness, He
declares, "Rise."

Corinthians 15:10). In other words, whatever you become and accomplish for God is the result of His grace and ability.

In Second Timothy 2:1, Paul writes, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." We are called to draw strength from His grace.

In his book, *Covenants and Blessings*, Andrew Murray summarizes these two facets of grace well:

Grace is not only the power that moves the heart of God in its compassion toward us when He acquits and accepts the sinner and makes him a child. It is also the power that moves the heart of the saint and provides it each moment with just the disposition and the power which it needs to love God and do His will.

The Different Roles of Faith and Grace

It is important to recognize God's grace as the source of power in your life. Grace works within you to bring change. As God's influence transforms you inwardly, you become more

effective in bringing change to outward situations.

Consider the important difference between the roles of faith and grace in our lives:

Faith changes things. God has given you His faith to bring change to the natural situations you face. He works with you to bring His power and influence into external circumstances that need to align with His will.

Grace, however, changes people. By God's grace, you become who He says you are in His Word.

You may be facing a difficult challenge right now. Perhaps the pressure feels overwhelming, and your weakness or inability seems to limit you. Yet God has provided all the supernatural power and ability you need to handle any situation.

When you find yourself in such a situation, follow the Apostle Peter's instruction in Second Peter 3:18 to "...grow in grace."

Greater Grace for Jesus in His Time of Greatest Need

Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane gives us one of the clearest examples of drawing on an extra measure of God's grace in a moment of intense need. The account is found in Matthew 26:36-41 (NKJV):

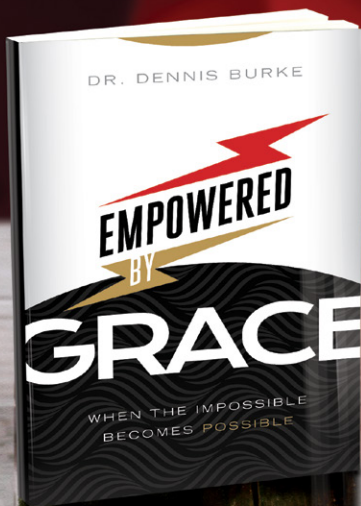
Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.

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Stay here and watch with Me.” He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you

not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Jesus entered the garden to pray under a heaviness so great it seemed it could kill Him. He asked, if possible, for the cup of suffering to pass from Him. His flesh

recoiled at the thought of the whips that would tear His back and the nails that would pierce His hands and feet, just as yours would.

Because the pressure was so intense, Jesus wanted His closest followers near Him.

Three times Jesus prayed in surrender. He was willing to do what was necessary, but the power and authority that had marked His earthly ministry were not evident in these prayers. You can sense the weight in His voice and hear the weakness of His humanity. When He later told Peter, “...The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” He was speaking not only of the disciples’ weakness, but also of His own.

He knows the limits our bodies and emotions try to place on us. Yet He shows us how to rise above human limitation and live by the

power of the inner spirit man.

Notice verses 45 and 46 (NKJV). Jesus’ voice sounds different now.

Then He came to His disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.”

Something has changed. When Jesus entered the garden, He wanted His closest disciples to stay awake and pray with Him. Now, with boldness, He declares, “Rise.”

John 18 tells us that Roman soldiers arrived at that moment looking for Jesus. In response, He spoke only three words, “I am He” — and the soldiers fell to the ground under the power of God (v. 6)!

This is no longer the



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heavy-hearted Jesus who entered the garden. A change has taken place. Jesus moves into the plan of redemption with complete control and full submission to the will of His Heavenly Father.

What made the difference in the garden? Hebrews 4:16 gives the answer: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Jesus came to the throne of grace and received the strength and ability to do what He could not do in Himself. He relied on His Heavenly Father — just as you must in the situations you face each day.

Jesus showed us how to face adversity through the power of the Holy Spirit. He knew the limitations of the flesh and was tempted in every way we are, yet He did not allow weakness to rule Him. He entered His Father's presence and found all

the help He needed.

We have unrestricted access to God's presence and throne. He invites us to come boldly to the throne of His grace and receive the strength and ability we need to overcome every situation we face in life.

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