

## GRACE

### 1 of 3 | An Abundance of Grace

#### SLIDE 1 Introduction

I read in the book of Zechariah an interesting statement that stuck with me. Zechariah was a post-exilic priest, that is he returned with the exiles after 70 years in Babylon captivity. Zechariah was called to preach restoration to the nation of Israel during their darkest time after the return to the Promised Land.

I guess this strikes me because there will be difficult times coming ahead in our nation. As for that matter, on all the nations of the world. Sometimes we get focused on what we are going through and how hard it is and forget to ponder what God may be doing for us in the midst of our suffering. He always provides a promise of restoration.

In Zachariah's prophecies he calls out a man by the name of Joshua (which we know is the Hebrew name for Jesus). In his vision Satan is standing beside Joshua to accuse him before the Lord. The word satan means "accuser." However the Lord rebukes Satan and gives Joshua a garment of righteousness. He also crowns him to reign over Israel.

Zechariah then calls out Zerubbabel by name and tells him as he started this house, he will also finish the work on it. (4:9) Of course we all know verse 10 of chapter 4 which says, *"For who hath despised the day of small things?"*

But what I noticed, and what I have built this series for September on, is this verse:

**SLIDE 2 Zechariah 4:7 (KJV)** *"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, **Grace, grace unto it.**"*

God is going to do a strange work in our days. In times of impossibility, the church is going to prosper and rise up. We are going to shine brighter than ever before. Partly because of the darkness closing in around us and partly because we will cling closer to the Lord than we have in the past. How is this possible? Grace.

*NOTE: Headstone, Keystone, Capstone - last block to complete an archway, a symbol of completion.*

Yes, we need to cling to nothing else but God's grace. It's not that we have finally figured it out and now we can get God to do what we want. It's not that we prayed harder and worked longer. It's not even that we repented of everything we've done wrong. The dark times ahead of us will be filled with grace. The mountainous situations in our lives will become level plains. The ways that we should walk in will become obvious. Why? Because we will bring forth the capstone and shout "Grace to it."

The church is going to quit crying out for God to show us what to do and we are going to ask for God to do what he does best—give us grace.

**SLIDE 3** **Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)** *"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."*

The boldness we need is not so much to command the powers of darkness as it is to simply ask God for his mercy over our lives. We need to find grace like never before.

Much of the works of the church are still self-focused. We are always asking God to bless what we are doing for him. In this time of great trial that is soon to be upon us, we will feel completely helpless in our own works. But God's work will prevail. His work of grace will do for us what nothing else can accomplish.

The needs that are arising in our nation are tremendous. However, his grace provides more than enough. His grace will encourage our hearts, direct our steps, and give us peace in the midst of the storm.

Let us learn to rely on grace more than our efforts to please God, and even serve God. As a pastor I speak often about our responsibility as a believer to learn the ways of the Lord and walk in them. However, we must not lose focus that our progress is from grace not from our efforts. Our growth is from his Spirit, not our minds.

This eliminates pride and gives us a humble heart to serve him only as he guides.

**SLIDE 4** **Being Too Helpful**

Have you ever experienced those people who are too helpful? Those ones who do

things for you that you are not asking? They think they have you figured out and step in a help you do things you are not doing. Sometimes they do things you have not asked of them. At other times they make plans for you that you have not considered. They say, "Well, I thought..." And that's the problem. They are thinking, instead of asking.

It's the same way with God. We are trying to get in his head and anticipate his next move. We want to be a part of it so much we try to make it happen for him. One, it hinders the work of God, Two, it frustrates us that God won't bless it with his power, And, three, it robs us of our peace and joy.

### **SLIDE 5 Here We Go Again**

Yes, it's true. Here I go, taking a major topic of the Bible, and trying to condense it down to a few points I want you to remember. Nevertheless, in this season, it is necessary to get a deeper understanding of how God's grace works for you. It's as important as the working of the Spirit's gifts, or as repentance and forgiveness.

For the next couple of weeks I want us to reorient our mindset to how grace operates in us and through us. We need to focus a little more on what God is willing to do for us, rather than all the things we want to accomplish for the Lord.

The word "grace" appears 170 times in the KJV of the Bible. It's not a small undertaking to understand it fully. However, our focus on grace will be narrowed down to a couple of aspects that will be necessary for us in the coming few years so we don't give way to fear.

Of the times "grace" is mentioned in the Bible, most of them are in the context of Paul's ministry, whether they appear in the book of Acts or in his Epistles. Grace appears 20 times in Romans alone, and four times in one verse of Romans—verse 11:6. This is where Paul compares grace and works.

Also, many times in Paul's salutations and closing he prays for the grace of the Lord Jesus to be with the saints. As in...

**SLIDE 6 1st Corinthians 16:23 (KJV)** *"The **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."*

Paul does warn us missing the truth of God's grace. It's not to be taken lightly, and it is not to be misunderstood as an excuse to continue in sin. Grace prevents us from being excluded because of failures in our pursuit. It also prevents us from losing all our gains when we mess up. People may write you off because of your past, but God does not. We gain access to him anew when we come in faith and repentance, asking for his forgiveness.

Paul stated his warning this way:

**SLIDE 7 2nd Corinthians 6:1 (KJV)** *"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye **receive not the grace of God in vain.**"*

The Bible tells us that we will have a struggle against sin in our lives. (Hebrews 12:4) We should not be surprised that we need an outpouring of his grace for us almost on a regular basis.

So as we dive this month into the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us not forget, without it, our progress would be halted, our sins would overwhelm us, and our efforts would all be in vain to please God.

But his grace does abound. It is his purpose to pour out his grace upon us. Let us learn to appreciate it and dwell in it during our times of struggle, times of failure, and times of doubt and fear.

Remember this:

**SLIDE 8 2nd Corinthians 9:8 (KJV)** *"And God is able to make **all grace abound toward you**; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."*

Even though this verse is about the grace of giving into God's work, the principle is the same for every area of your life. God wants you to operate out of abundance.

### **SLIDE 9 Altar Time**

Is there anyone here today still struggling with a weight of self-condemnation that overwhelms you at times? You need grace and we need to pray with you.