

“STEWARDING GOD’S GRACE”

Sunday, December 4, 2016

In this series we are placing a special emphasis on service and responsibility—our responsibility in serving God in the sphere of influence He has placed each one of us in.

† **Stewarding your Trials**

In the first message *stewarding your trials* we considered the *wrong* question that we ask and the *right* questions we should ask. We look at the “*why*” question and see the error of it. Then we considered the right questions, first asking, “*Who*—Who are you Lord?” The goal is to look beyond the storm and see the God who controls the storm—the God who is purposeful in every trial He allows us to go through.

We followed this question with the “*what*” questions—“what are you saying, Lord?” and “what do you want me to do, Lord?” As we look beyond the storm and see the God who controls the storm—the God who desires what is best for our lives as He desires to draw us closer to Him—we can then see what He is teaching us and in turn be prepared to serve Him.

† **Stewarding God’s Grace**

As we consider our trials and the various challenges that we face in this life it is helpful for us to see that there is help. God’s grace—**His *divine enablement* is always available for us for every step in this life.**

I. _____ Grace—What is it?**A. A _____ Definition**

Grace simply defined is unmerited, unearned and undeserved favor. The acronym for G-R-A-C-E is God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense is also a simple and effective way of defining the grace of God.

Strong’s Concordance – “the Divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life.”

A. A Practical Definition (Philippians 2:13)

In the Bible we see different aspects of God's grace.

1. **God's *Saving* Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)**
 2. **God's *Violent* Grace (Psalm 51:8)**
 3. **God's *Living* Grace (2 Corinthians 9:8)**
 4. **God's *Painful* Grace (2 Corinthians 12:7-9)**
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II. _____ Grace—How do I get it?

A. It's _____ (2 Corinthians 9:8)

This word "*abound*" carries the idea of waves continuously coming upon the shore. There is no end in sight—so it is with God as He sends continuous waves bathing us in His grace. It keeps coming because it truly is endless. It is the "*God of all grace*" to Whom we go for this never ending, never ceasing grace.

It's _____ (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)

Q: So how do attain or take hold of this *living grace* of God? How can you and I learn to enjoy this *living grace* that God so graciously makes available to us?

Consider what Peter and James say about this (1 Peter 5:5 & James 4:6).

1 Peter 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of **God**, that **He** may exalt you in due time:

Consider Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 12.

1. God _____ Paul (v. 1-6)

Q: How could Paul have stayed silent for 14 years with regards to this great experience that he had? This second experience is the answer.

2. God _____ Paul (v. 7-8)

God in His grace and wisdom knows exactly what each of us need (Php. 4:19).

God allowed Satan to “*buffet*” Paul (v. 7) in order to keep him from being “*exalted above measure*” or being lifted up with pride. This word “*buffet*” speaks of striking with a fist. This “*thorn in the flesh*” that Paul endured speaks of being either constant or reoccurring suffering.

Suffering is a tool of God’s grace to build Godly character (Romans 5:1-5).

Paul was given a “*thorn in the flesh*” as a means of God’s **painful grace**.

We can respond in a number of ways.

- *Bitterness* – blaming God for robbing us of our freedom and pleasure.
- *Giving up* – by doing this we forfeit any blessing from the suffering.
- *Grin and bear it* – although this looks like it is effective and courageous, this drains us of strength and over time we collapse and give up.
- *Yield* – we can surrender our will to the will of the Father. We can seek Him and allow Him to teach us to be dependent upon Him.

3. God _____ Paul (v. 9-10)

Q: So how did God help Paul?

A: He helped him see that his suffering was an act of God’s grace—His painful grace.

The “strength” of God is “made perfect” in that it is manifested in the weakness of the humble believer. God’s power becomes a reality in the life of the believer when the he ceases to rely upon his own strength and in turn depends upon God for strength.

A.W. Tozer – It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply. If God has singled you out to be a special object of His grace you may expect Him to honor you with stricter discipline and greater suffering than less favored ones are called upon to endure.

If God sets out to make you an unusual Christian He is not likely to be as gentle as He is usually pictured by the popular teachers. A marble sculptor does not use a manicure set to reduce the rude, unshapely marble to a thing of beauty. The saw, the hammer and the chisel are cruel tools, but without them the rough stone must remain forever formless and unbeautiful. (*“Renewed Day by Day: A Daily Devotional, Feb. 20)*

The reality of this statement is seen here in 2Co 12:9. God’s painful grace is necessary to change us into the image of His dear Son. It is necessary to break us and mold us so that He can use us His way.

	9 Little Brooklyn Rd, Warwick, NY 10990 pastor@PIBCNY.com / www.PIBCNY.com / John Lashuay, Pastor
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