

Finding Grace Through God's Word

Acts 20:28-32

I. Personal Example Britt's birth

It was Thursday Jan 8 morning 6:00 am

1. Teri was 7 months pregnant with Britt
2. She woke me up and said, I think I am in labor
3. Call the doctor—said go to Hospital

B. Britt heart rate dropped dangerously slow

C. Born that night—8 weeks early 4 lb 5 oz

1. Put on a ventilator—
2. 50% of survival

D. I needed God's grace—divine assistance

1. God gave me a verse from His Word that gave me the divine help I needed

2. *This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God*

E. God used the word of His grace to give me the help I needed

1. We have been looking at the 4 main ways God gives grace (divine assistance) to us to live in our situation in a way that glorifies Him.

***Through Prayer** Heb 4:16

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.

***Through Other Christians** 1 Thess 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

***Through Submission to God** 1 Peter 5:6

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,

2. Today we shall see the 4th—the primary means God uses to ... the Word of His grace

C. **Read text** Acts 20:28-32

1. Paul is on his way to Jerusalem

*on his way he meets with the elders of the church of Ephesus

—Paul had stayed with them for 3 years

—teaching them the Word of God

—these elders had come to say their “good byes” to Paul

*the Holy Spirit has revealed to him that imprisonment and afflictions await him there

2. Paul knows he will never see these leaders again so he gives them some final instructions

D. He tells them:

1. To guard the church against false teachers
2. To shepherd the flock

E. After giving them these two awesome responsibilities, he tells them were they will find God's power to fulfill these two tasks (32)

Acts 20:32

"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.

1. Paul says the divine assistance they need can be found in God's word of grace
2. He is saying God's Word is able to build them up (give them the strength they need) to fulfill these responsibilities.

3. Not only that, but God will use His Word to give them the divine power they need to stay saved so they will receive the inheritance God has for all those who continue in the faith!

F. Today we will see God's means of giving us His divine assistance—His Word

1. See 3 ways God uses . . .

**I. GOD USES HIS WORD TO NOURISH OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE. 1
Peter 2:2**

like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

The word of God is food for our spirit.

1. God is giving us an analogy here
2. The word of God to the Christian is like milk is to a newborn!
3. Let's think about this for a moment

* **What does a newborn need the most?**

—mother's milk or formula

—that's the only thing a newborn can eat

***that milk is that baby's life**

—w/o it the baby will die

***but with mother's milk that baby has what it needs to be**

nourished, to grow, and to healthy

B. So it is with the Christian as God's word God gives life through His word!

1. The word of God is necessary for a Christian's **spiritual nourishment**

- *just like milk is life for the baby
- *the word of God is life for the Christian

John 6:63

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

*Jesus is saying there is a spiritual life-sustaining power in the Word of God

*Jesus ministers His life to us through His word

*Jesus' life is His grace (divine assistance) to us

Illus. What would happen to a baby if the mother only fed it once a day or once a week?

*fail to thrive

*it would be weak, sick, anemic

* It's the same for us—if we only feed on God's word once or twice a week will fail to thrive spiritually

*we will become spiritually weak, sick, anemic

*so weak we will not be able to fight off temptation and satan's attacks

2. So the word of God is necessary for our spiritual **nourishment**.

III. GOD USES HIS WORD TO BRING SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MATURITY IN US.

The Word of God is perfect food for your soul—perfect like mother's milk

1. Just like that milk is necessary for that baby to grow into maturity—so the Word of God is necessary for us to grow ...

John 17:17

Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

2. Sanctify means to be holy—spiritual growth

3. God uses His word to bring spiritual maturity in us

*The only way you can grow spiritually is through God's Word

*a steady diet of God's word is necessary if you are to grow spiritually strong/healthy

*Illus. If I go a day with feeding on God's word I can tell it in my spiritual life

*Empty spot that can only be filled with God's Word

Illus. I have never know a growing, spiritually mature Christian who did not have a regular time in God's word

B. 1st God uses His word to produce reverence (fear) for Him

Ps 119:38

Establish Your word to Your servant,

As that which produces reverence for You.

1. The importance of fearing God is a major teaching of the Bible

Psalms 112:1

****“Blessed is the man who fears the Lord”***

Ps 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom ;

Prov 19:23

23 The fear of the LORD leads to life,

So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.

2. Fear of God is so important and it comes through God’s Word

*in His word we see God

*as we see Him in His majesty and Holiness we come to highly revere, respect Him—this brings about spiritual maturity

C. 2nd God uses His word to bring spiritual growth in us as it actually works in us to produce spiritual maturity.

1 Thess 2:13

13 For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.

1. The word of God is not just words on a page

2. The word of God is living and active

Heb 4:12

12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart

2. In some way we do not understand—when we embrace God’s word in faith it actually performs its work in us to bring us into spiritual maturity.

Illus. One of the most dramatic examples of the Bible’s divine ability to transform men and women involved the famous mutiny on the "Bounty." Following their rebellion against the notorious Captain Bligh, nine mutineers, along with the Tahitian men and women who accompanied them, found their way to Pitcairn Island, a tiny dot in the South Pacific only two miles long and a mile wide. Ten years later, drink and fighting had left only one man alive-- **John Adams**. **11** women and **23** children made up the rest of the Island’s population. So far this is the familiar story made famous in the book and motion picture. But the rest of the story is even more remarkable. About this time, Adams came across the "Bounty’s" Bible in the bottom of an old chest. He began to read it, and the divine power of God’s Word reached into the heart of that hardened murderer on a tiny volcanic speck in the vast Pacific Ocean--and changed his life forever. **The peace and love that Adams found in the Bible entirely replaced the old life of quarreling, brawling, and liquor.** He began to teach the children from the Bible until every person

on the island had experienced the same amazing change that he had found. Today, with a population of slightly less than 100, nearly every person on Pitcairn Island is a Christian.

My life—love your wife as Christ loves the church

C. God uses the word to bring spiritual maturity as it produces faith in us.

Rom 10:17

17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ

1. Faith is crucial to spiritual maturity.
2. W/o faith it is impossible to please God
3. With faith one can move mountains, perform miracles
4. Nothing is impossible to him who believes
5. Faith comes from God's word—as Christ speaks to us His Word

Illus. Hudson Taylor

There was one lesson that young Mr. Taylor knew he must learn, if he wanted to be a successful missionary in China, and that was the lesson of faith. He knew there would be many times in that far-away country when he would have no one to depend upon but God, and he must know how to get his prayers through and receive an answer. He wanted to know how to "move man, through God, by prayer alone."

Dr. Hardey had told Hudson Taylor to remind him when it was time for his salary to be paid, as he was a very busy man, and probably rather forgetful, but Hudson made up his mind that he would do nothing except to pray about it. He felt that God could remind Dr. Hardey in answer to his prayers, and this would strengthen his faith.

One time the day drew near, and passed by, and the salary was not paid. At the end of the week, he found he had just a half-crown left. Still he said nothing, except to God. Sunday night, after a meeting with the poor people to whom he often preached, a man asked him to come and pray for his wife, who seemed to be dying. He had asked the priest to come, but he was too poor to pay the eighteen pence which the priest asked. His family was starving and the poor man was discouraged.

Taylor knew they needed food and he thought, "Ah, if I only had two shillings and sixpence instead of this half-crown, how gladly would I give these poor people a shilling." He had something at home for supper that night and for breakfast the next morning, but nothing more than that. Could he give up all he had and trust God to supply his need?

Through a dark court they went, then up some rickety stairs, and reached the poor room where the man's wife lay, with a baby thirty-six hours old, moaning at her side. Four or five hungry children stood about the room. When Taylor saw this scene of poverty, he thought he would like to give them a shilling and a half, but had not made up his mind to give up the whole coin. He tried to tell them of a loving heavenly Father who would care for them, but he could not say very much. Then he knelt to pray, but his conscience troubled him. How could he pray when he was not willing to give to these poor people who needed help so desperately? "You see what a terrible state we are in, sir; if you can help us, for God's sake do!" the poor man said. Taylor remembered that Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee," and he obeyed the command. He gave up his all, and in doing that he not only helped the poor people in their distress, but he won a victory and was happy.

"Give, and it shall be given unto you," the Bible says, "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Early the next morning the mailman left an envelop containing no letter, nor even the name of the sender, but a pair of new kid gloves and a half-sovereign coin. This was five times as much as he had given away, and he felt that God had paid him good interest.

IV. GOD USES HIS WORD TO ENABLE US TO PERSEVERE IN THE FAITH

A. The word of God is necessary for a Christian's spiritual **perseverance**.

1. The only reason we persevere in the faith is God's grace
2. If it depended on us to stay faithful to God we would all fall away

3. But it does not depend on us but on God who gives us the grace to persevere.

4. He means that God uses to give us the grace to preserve is His word.

Rom 15:4-5

4 For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. 5 Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,

*Notice it is God who gives the perseverance and encouragement but He gives it through the Scriptures.

B. 1st God used His word to give us **encouragement**

Illus. How many times have you been encouraged to keep going while reading about some person in the Bible

Me coming to Westside—David waiting on God's timing to become king

C. 2nd God uses His word to **keep us from sin**.

Ps 119:11

*Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.*

1. It reveals what is sinful—

*stealing, lying, gossip,

2. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to prompt us before we sin

Illus. in store—clerk incompetent, ring you up wrong, does not know how to fix it, calls manager,

*tempted to be impatient, unkind to them

*Holy Spirit brings to mind the verse—

Gal 5:22

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

D. God gives us His word as a spiritual **weapon** against satan's attacks.

Eph 6:17

17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

1. One of the greatest weapons we have against satan's attacks is the word of God

Illus. It is recorded that during the coronation of Edward VI, after various ceremonial swords had been brought to him, the king said to his nobles: "There is one sword yet lacking, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Without that sword we are nothing and we can do nothing!"

*Because—satan's attacks are wrapped up in his lies

*God's word is truth—it destroys satan's lies

Illus. When Jesus was tempted by satan, He used God's word to defeat satan

*satan lied to Jesus and told Him if He would worship satan, he would give him the kingdoms of the world

*Jesus pulled out the sword of the word and cut satan's temptation to pieces as He quoted Deut 6 Matt 4:10-11

Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

2. When satan comes to you and tempts you with his lie—*come on, do it, no one will know, it won't hurt to do it just once*

You pull out the sword of God's word

Gal 6:7

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

Yes, it will hurt me, I will be sowing seeds of destruction—God will know

3. Ask God to give you a verse—take that sword and cut satan's temptation to pieces

IV. WHERE DO YOU FIND GOD'S GRACE?

One of the main places in in His Word.

1. He uses it to nourish our soul

2. He uses it to bring spiritual growth and maturity in us.

3. He uses it to enable us to persevere in the faith

B. That means if you are going to have a vital, growing, healthy spiritual life you must have a steady diet of God's Word.

1. Just coming to church on Sunday is not enough

2. You must daily spend time reading and studying God's Word.

3. If you really want a spiritual boost (B12) spiritual super vitamin) memorize and mediate on God's Word.

Illus. Clarence Hall, a World War II correspondent, gave this remarkable testimony: "I can never think of the boons and benefits that the Bible invariably brings without thinking of Shimmabuke, a tiny village I came upon as a war correspondent in Okinawa. Thirty years before, an American missionary en route to Japan had stopped there just long enough to make two converts-Shosei Kina and his brother Mojon. He left a Bible with them and passed on. For thirty years they had no contact with any other Christian missionary, but they made the Bible come alive! They taught the other villagers until every man, woman, and child in Shimmabuke became a Christian. Shosei Kina became the headman of the village, and Mojon the chief teacher. In the school the Bible was read daily. The precepts of the Bible were law in the village. In those thirty years there developed a Christian democracy in its purest form. When the American army came to the island, an advance patrol swept up to the village compound with guns leveled. The two old men stepped forth, bowed low, and began to speak. An interpreter explained that the old men were welcoming the Americans as fellow Christians! The flabbergasted GIs sent for their chaplain. He came with officers of the Intelligence Service. They toured the village. They were astounded at the spotlessly clean homes and streets and the gentility of the inhabitants. The other Okinawan villages they had seen were filthy, and the people were ignorant and poverty-stricken. Later I strolled through Shimmabuke with a tough army sergeant. He said, "I can't figure it out -this kind of people coming from a Bible and a couple of old guys who wanted to live like Jesus Christ. Maybe we have been using the wrong kind of weapons to make the world over!"