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Faith alone in Christ alone

Greetings to you all from Grace Evangelistic Ministries. We thank God our Father for His unsurpassing grace and kindness by which we have been adopted into His Royal family and can be called children of God (I John 3:1). We consider it a great honor and privilege to serve in His Kingdom-an honor which we couldn't earn or deserve.

We thank Him for using His children as channels of blessing so we can continue to serve His purpose. God knows who you are and where you are at this moment and how to reward those who honor Him. To these partners we share the words of the apostle Paul: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

Because of God's rich blessings, Grace Evangelist Ministries and R.B. Thieme, Jr Ministries has been able to supply thousands of believers with doctrinal literature, audio tapes, and study tools for pastors in Africa. These believers are becoming invisible heroes by taking in Bible doctrine on a regular basis, thereby advancing to the high ground of spiritual maturity where we glorify God. And, it all began with the simple gospel message of faith alone in Christ alone.

In this issue, we'd like to remind you of the danger of falling short of the finish line and of losing your eternal rewards. How? By forgetting that nothing is more important than daily perception and application of Bible doctrine. The Lord instructs us to concentrate and to focus on becoming winner-believers:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the [believers]. To him, who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). He added, "I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one [Satan's fiery darts, circumstances] will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the

temple of my God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from my God, and my new name" (Revelation 3:11,12).

The apostle Paul was acutely aware of this magnificent reward and the possibility of losing it. What concerned the greatest apostle should be our concern as well: "Therefore, I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline [Greek: bruise] my body [constantly bringing my thoughts, and actions to conform with divine viewpoint] and make it my slave, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified [from receiving the reward!]" (I Corinthians 9:26,27).

Paul beckons us toward the goal: "...but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus...I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

Satan is keenly aware of the enormous reward which awaits the winner-believer. And, knowing that our eternity is secure, his goal, therefore, is to disqualify us from receiving rewards both in time and in eternity (I Corinthians 3:14-15). He knows that he has forever lost his reward, thus he fights tooth and nail to see we lose ours. He is a genius-canny, shrewd, and clever in his tactics; therefore, he comes to us disguised and attacking from every angle so that only those who are sober in their spiritual lives (I Peter 5:8) can detect him. When we master one of his schemes, he invents a new one. In view of this, Paul warns, "...Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14).

The issue boils down to these questions: What on earth can disqualify me from the rewards laid up for me? What can be worth that kind of loss...pursuit of fame...the desire to become wealthy or to acquire material things? Whatever the reason, is it worth it?

You and I live in a world where distraction has skyrocketed, offering endless diversions from our divine objective: the glorification of God. Its importance so grand that we must monitor our motivation and actions and decisions to align with God's fool-proof plan for our lives! Locking our sights on that objective, concentrating on Bible doctrine, and persevering as Christ persevered will ensure the sober spiritual life that can detect the snare of Satan.

Our Lord in His incarnation was focused on fulfilling the Divine Objective, namely His efficacious spiritual death on the cross, and He was never distracted! He had us in mind, and He knew the reward which God the Father had in store for Him. Christ Jesus never forgot whose power He depended on and often went to isolated areas where He meditated and prayed. Luke wrote, "But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (5:16). The Word of God shows us how to persevere..."Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of [Bible doctrine], who for the [exhibited] joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus pioneered our journey then placed the assets necessary to become winner-believers in each positive believer's hands! Paul used these same assets to become victorious in Christ through Bible doctrine and by the power of the Holy Spirit. By "Fixing our eyes on Jesus..." and concentrating on daily doctrine, we will attain the goal; we will not lose our reward. It has all already been planned out for us. All we can add is "want to."

Our objectives at Grace Evangelistic Ministries remain undiminished as we continue to serve God and to advance in the devil's world because of our Father's grace. Nonetheless, we humbly

ask you to consider praying for us routinely. And to our partners who have made it a point to pray for our ministry, we want you to know that we remain forever grateful. The work ahead is enormous, but our solace and motivation is that the battle is the Lord's!

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Israel is our fortress" (Psalm 46:7).

Forever drowned in the ocean of His grace,
Moses C. Onwubiko; Grace Evangelistic Ministries

You shall know the
truth, and the truth
shall set you free.
JOHN 8:32

Doctrine of Grace

By Reverend Moses C. Onwubiko
(Lesson 8—Continued from volume 21 [Lesson7])

PAUL—A TROPHY OF GRACE

Before you begin this section, you may want to pause and acknowledge any known sins (1 John 1:9) that may hinder the Holy Spirit from saturating your soul with this doctrinal exposition. If you are an unbeliever, you may want to take a moment to tell God the Father that you now believe in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father,

We pause to pray for those who will study this important doctrine. Father, we pray the individual's mind may be fully enlightened with regard to Your unfathomable, unparalleled, immeasurable, and unsurpassing grace. We humbly ask that their eyes be opened to behold "how wide and long and high and deep" is Your unchanging grace toward the entire human race. May their understanding of this doctrine serve as a link to other biblical doctrines, such as salvation by grace and the eternal security of those who have personally trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. May Your children, for whom this glimpse of Your grace is new, enjoy a sense of relief at the end of this biblical study.

And we ask that Your promise in John 8:32, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free," be fulfilled for those who approach this teaching with humility. May they be set free from the bondage of legalism. Thank you, Father for answering this prayer offered in the Name of the King of kings, Lord of lords, and our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Previously, in volume 21, we examined the highlights of Paul's life and his high-powered enthusiasm to serve God. We observed his enormous passion for God's service and how he used it wrongly, which negated his passion. We are acutely aware that a right thing done in a wrong way is wrong. His desire to serve God was a right thing, but his persecution of believers was wrong. Words are inadequate to express how Paul tormented believers.

In his defense before Agrippa II, Paul said, "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 'And this is just what I did in Jerusalem. Not only did I lock many saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities'" (Acts 26:9-11).

Saul (Paul) was a nightmare and a monster to the new embryonic era-the church! That's right. Wouldn't you think the Lord would bring lightening upon such an opponent to send him straight to the Lake of Fire? Didn't he deserve to be separated from God for all eternity? But was he struck or separated forever? No! Instead, he was assured of the crown of righteousness in eternity! Read it again-the crown of righteousness! That's grace!

In his last epistle, Paul (a.k.a. Saul), who tortured the early Christians wrote, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure [to be with my friend, Jesus Christ] has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day [the depraved one in every sense of the word], and not only to me but also to all [who have been graced out] who have loved His appearing" (II Timothy 4:6-8).

We are examining the most pivotal doctrine of Scripture-the doctrine of grace. What transpired between the time Paul brought distress to the church and the time of his departure? Grace! A favor done without expectation of return; freely given by the loving kindness of God to men, finding its only motive in the bounty and free heartedness of the Giver [i.e. God]; unearned and unmerited favor.

As we move forward in our study, we shall see how Paul's understanding of grace turned around his thoughts, motives, and actions. The more he looked back to who he was before grace found him, the more he saw himself basked in the light of God's nature-GRACE. By the same token, the more you and I understand grace, contrasted with our own depraved natures, the more gratitude we'll have to be graced-out citizens of Heaven-unmerited citizenship!

PAUL'S CONVERSION

In the Supreme Court of Heaven, the righteousness of God condemned Saul of Tarsus for his atrocious and horrific attack on the church-the body of the second member of the Trinity, Jesus Christ. The justice of God demanded swift action...perhaps to be struck down with instant death and be separated from God for all eternity. But, the Son of God pointed to the cross of Calvary where the sins of Saul and everyone else's were condemned by the righteousness of God...poured out on Christ and judged by God's justice. The efficacious sacrifice of the Lamb of God opened the gate of grace wide. Paul walked through the gate, and became the object of God's infinite grace. That same gate stands wide open for you and I.

In Luke's record we read, "And it came about that as he [Paul] journeyed, he was approaching Damascus [where he hoped to torment a few believers], and suddenly a light [the shekinah glory] from Heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Acts 9:3,4). We can ignore "Saul, Saul..." for a moment and rewrite this passage, "Legalistic believer, lordship salvation teacher, salvation by baptism advocate, salvation by works preacher, why are you persecuting me?"

Ironically, when any believer deviates from grace orientation, he becomes Christ's persecutor-

an "enemy of the cross of Christ" (Philippians 3:18). The solution for this kind of believer remains the same: Name your sins to God (I Jn. 1:9) and begin to take in the Word of God under a grace pastor/teacher.

What Paul experienced on the road to Damascus became the focal point for his lifestyle of grace. For, when Paul asked, "Who are you Lord?" he received a reply that shook his world upside down: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). Paul was in shock. He froze instantly! All along, he thought he was serving God, when in essence, he was attacking his Creator. Paul beheld grace for the first time as he heard the Lord's instruction: "But get up, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do" (v. 6). Apparently, that wasn't what Paul thought he would hear. He was probably braced to hear, "Paul, you're toast!" Or "because you have tormented me, I will torment you-may worms eat you alive!" But on the contrary, he heard the soft, sweet voice of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ saying, "Arise."

Some important principles have emerged:

- i. Paul's attack against God and believers stemmed from ignorance, self-righteousness-polished arrogance. Often, we may think that we are serving God, because someone is praising us, or it "feels" right, without knowing that we are in opposition.
- ii. What Paul truly deserved was cursing. What Paul received was blessing.
- iii. The Lord Jesus Christ bypassed what Paul deserved and offered him an opportunity for regeneration. That's grace in action!
- iv. Obviously, what happened on the Damascus road was fresh in his thoughts when he wrote to the Corinthians: "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (I Corinthians 15:10a). He knew that were it not for God's grace, he would have been struck dead when Christ indicted him.
- v. Paul did not automatically become grace-oriented, but a building block was set in place. Reflect back to how miserable we were when Christ found us. Since then, have we ever failed God? Has God ever failed us? Is the doctrine of grace beginning to register?

"And he [Paul] was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drink" (Acts 9:9). When Paul was struck with blindness, he immediately recognized his error and surrendered instantly to the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus Christ. The three days of blindness were days of dealing with the Lord and soul-searching.

While still cogitating such amazing grace, the Lord called Ananias to restore Paul's sight and to reveal the divine commission to him (v. 11, 12). Ananias refused to go, at first, because he was familiar with Paul's reputation (v. 13,14). "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to bear My name before the gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel'" (v. 15). An ex-killer of Christians, had become an "instrument" of God. That's grace!

He was chosen while he was still blind, still depraved, and had not lifted a finger to undo his monstrous oppression on the church. His salvation came as a result of his faith alone, in Christ alone. There is nothing in Scripture to suggest that he invited Christ into his heart, made Christ Lord or was baptized for his salvation. Ananias baptized him, but not for salvation; he was baptized because he was already saved.

In Acts, we witness a similar salvation (by grace) in Cornelius' house: "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins. While Peter was still speaking these words [the gospel], the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message [because they have believed]" (Acts 10:43,44). Peter added, "Surely no one can refuse the water for these [new believers] to be baptized who have [already] received the Holy Spirit just as we did [on the Day of Pentecost], can he? Then he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ..." (v. 47,48). Cornelius, his household, and guests

believed in Christ alone and were instantly entered into union with Christ by means of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Paul further confirms his and our salvation by grace when he said in Ephesians 2:8,9, "For by grace you have been saved [perfect tense in Greek: saved at a point, and remained saved forever] through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one may boast."

He became well aware of the condition he was in when grace found him: Working diligently for salvation, but to no avail. No wonder he wrote, "Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith [alone] in Christ Jesus, even we [including himself] have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

Clearly, Paul's conversion was a perfect manifestation of God's grace. What have we learned from Paul's conversion?

1. In Paul's helplessness, the Lord sent help. He didn't have to travel miles to Ananias, rather Ananias went to him. Similarly, the altar of salvation is brought to us. We can be saved anywhere, any time-right now!
2. The Lord is the One who seeks us in our depraved and lost state. He called Peter, Nathaniel, John, Zacchaeus, and (fill your name in here). He called Paul on his way to Damascus. "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Grace eliminates any suggestion of human effort for salvation.
3. God does not deal with us on the basis of who we are, but rather on the basis of who and what He is.
4. If Paul, who callously slaughtered believers, was saved, and commissioned to serve, anyone, regardless of how heinous his sins, has an opportunity to be saved.
5. No matter how genuine we are in service, if it does not conform to God's plan, we are antagonistic to His plan-attacking the Lord. We should be very careful not to add to God's plan. Making an issue of baptism, or making Christ Lord as a prerequisite for salvation, is an attack against grace. God does not need our help; we definitely need His help.

Throughout Paul's epistles, he referred to his salvation and commission as the divine work of grace. In his epistle to Timothy, we read, " I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (I Timothy 1:12-15). What an inspiring statement of grace orientation.

GRACE ORIENTATION:

Grace orientation is a mental attitude which a believer develops over time. The more a believer exposes himself to sound Bible teaching on a regular basis, the more he sees his own powerlessness under the high-powered microscope of the infallible Word of God-the more he strives to raise a Super Structure of grace in his soul through the utilization of grace assets, namely the power of the Holy Spirit and Bible doctrine. First, we learn the doctrine of Harmartiology (sin), which sheds light on who we are-depraved and lost sinners unable to save ourselves!

Second, we learn the doctrine of Kenosis, which opens our eyes to Christ's great love for mankind "...that though He [Christ Jesus] was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:9); and, "Although He [Christ Jesus] existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6,7). Step by step, the building blocks are put in place. We begin to have an inkling of what it cost Christ to step out of His glory as God and put on humanity.

Third, we are exposed to the doctrine of Soteriology, and we humbly behold the unique and unparalleled sufferings of Christ. Understanding deepens, then awe develops upon studying the atoning work of Christ, namely propitiation, justification, sanctification, redemption, and adoption. When the believer realizes that he was spiritually dead, hopeless, helpless, and useless when God freely imputed His eternal life into him, grace-thinking has begun-the Super Structure well on its way-by a simple act of faith!

Fourth, another block of grace is added when it dawns on the believer that our work never impresses God; what impresses Him is what He does for and through man. Paul understood all these doctrines and beyond. We will develop how doctrine restructured Paul's thinking and motivation as the teaching progresses.

PAUL'S COMMISSION-GRACE ALL THE WAY

"Paul an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)....For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...." (Galatians 1:1,13-15)

Paul's commission existed in the Lord's mind billions of years ago, pre-angelic or human history. He was appointed without a vote or winning a contest or being best at anything-from his "mother's womb"(Galatians 1:15). It is true that Paul was by far the most educated man in his day, but his academic prowess had no bearing on his divine commission, nor on the Super Structure forming in his soul.

The building blocks mounted higher as Paul learned more doctrine and the many facets of God's essence permeated his soul. Damascus was the beginning; from there, gratitude soared! "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (I Timothy 1:12-15).

In light of this exposition, two lessons have surfaced:

1. Paul's appointment was an issue in eternity past-unmerited. The realization of divine favor bestowed to him was the beginning of grace thinking. Similarly, when you and I understand that we are in God's plan, apart from our meddling, we begin to think in grace.

2. Paul's salvation, and divine commission came to him at the pinnacle of his arrogance-when the cup of his self-righteousness and sin overflowed-when he repeatedly aimed to bring down the One who later saved him. Paul, a master of the Mosaic Law, could barely believe the trade-off. He knew from the Mosaic Law that any blasphemy against God was punishable by death. He had blasphemed and ridiculed God and yet remained alive and received a divine commission! If anyone could echo the lyrics of the song "Amazing Grace" Paul would be first in line. No! Not Paul, but Moses!

Paul had yet another grace lesson.

PAUL'S EMOTION, FAILURE, AND GRACE RESCUE

We need to deviate for a moment to examine some Biblical facts about emotion.

God is not emotional and never has been and never will be. In the book *Biblical Doctrine of Salvation*, we looked at the doctrine of the essence of God. One characteristic of His essence is immutability; He doesn't have the mood swing that emotion leaves in its wake. Suffice it to say, the only member of the Trinity that had emotion was Christ in His human nature. He manifested emotion when He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem; He wept for the city (Luke 19:41) and at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35). Our Lord's emotional response, however, was never sinful nor ever in self-pity.

A major drawback to emotion is that it can be irrational, causing a believer to steer off course as happened to Paul. Another point: Emotion doesn't think nor was it designed to think; it serves as a responder to a thought system designed by God. Normal emotion includes grief, sorrow, joy, excitement, and the like. On the other hand, anger, bitterness, hatred, jealousy, guilt worry, fear, and depression characterize abnormal emotion.

Emotion has eight major characteristics:

1. Emotion is designed to be an appreciator, to respond to thought.
2. It wanes easily, and so does any promise made under its influence.
3. Emotion can actually become a hindrance to one's spiritual advance in God's plan.
4. It can cause a believer to drift from God's plan.
5. It is irrational and thus incapable of making good decisions.
6. Emotion can make or break a believer.
7. Emotion is not criteria for worshipping God. "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the Holy Spirit] and [Bible doctrine]" (John 4:24).
8. It is not a criteria for decision-making.

Now, we can look at how an emotional decision nearly shortened Paul's ministry. Powered by emotion, he made perhaps the greatest post-salvation mistake of his life-rejection of God's command to not go to Jerusalem. We are not studying Paul's emotional sin, but rather to underline the concept of God's grace in his life even when he failed.

Poignantly, Paul received a series of divine warnings not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21). Because of Paul's negative volition to divine warning, the prophet Agabus "...took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands and said, 'This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man [Paul] who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles'" (v. 11). Paul ignored the prophecy and went to Jerusalem, nonetheless.

While in Jerusalem, James, the Lord's stepbrother, and others gave Paul bad advice. Human

solution. They strongly encouraged him to observe Mosaic Law for the benefit of those who opposed Paul for not keeping the law (V. 21-24). Under emotional influence, and irrational because of it, Paul acquiesced and entered the Temple where the mob seized him and dragged him out to kill him (v. 31). While in the hands of this embittered religious mob, the Lord, whom he disobeyed, came to his rescue through the Roman army commander.

In Luke's account we read, "And while they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort [or battalion]....And at once he took along some soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul" (v.31, 32). Paul came very close to death, but God in His infinite mercy and grace rescued him.

You may want to take a quiz. How many times have you failed God? I know that my failures probably outweigh yours and Paul's; and yet, through my ups and downs, the grace of God has never let go of me; this is true of you, likewise. Obviously, that was true of Paul.

DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES AND APPLICATIONS

(A) God never deals with us on the basis of who we are, rather on the basis of who and what He is-gracious and full of compassion (Psalm 112:4). Jacob acknowledged, "...God has dealt with me graciously..." (Genesis 33:11). Here was a man who stole his brother's blessing (Genesis 27); and yet, God did not treat him in kind.

(B) Before we were saved, we were rotten and spiritually decomposing in sin; and yet, graced-out by the Master. Paul put it this way: "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins....But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great [unfailing] love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)" (Ephesians 2:1,4-5). Did you do anything to be saved? Of course not! You were saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

(C) After salvation, we are wrapped in grace. Too often, we fail God, but He has not failed us-not even once! He always welcomes us back with open arms. That's what grace is all about-never earned-never deserved.

(D) Whatever we are or could be is a matter of His marvelous grace. Paul poses the question: "...What do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (I Corinthians 4:7b).

(E) There is no reason for any believer to puff himself up-be it success in business, profession, or whatever. In Paul's case, he was successful in everything he took to task. But when he inventoried his life, he humbly affirmed, "But by the grace of God I am what I am..." (I Corinthians 15:10a).

You may wish to pause as I have done and recount the events of your life. Can you truly say without equivocation that "By the grace of God I am what I am?"

FINAL THOUGHTS

Paul-a trophy of grace-wrote, "But by His doing (minus anyone's effort) you are in Christ Jesus..." (I Corinthians 1:30a); and, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works (of any kind), that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

God is perfect and His work is perfect. God the Son purchased you (I Peter 1:18, 19). God the Holy Spirit sealed you (II Corinthians 1:22). God the Father keeps you saved by His power (John 10:29). God provides salvation in grace. We have nothing to add. We are the objects and beneficiaries of His grace forever.

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling (i.e., losing your salvation), and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority before all time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25).
To be continued-(Volume 23-lesson 9)

WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

As we grow in our spiritual lives, we are certain to encounter trials and testing. But one thing is crystal clear: "No [testing] has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who [cannot and] will not allow you to be [tested] beyond what you are able [to bear], but with the testing will provide the way of escape also, that you will be able to endure it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

No matter how difficult things may be in our lives, let us always remember Paul's encouragement: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Romans 8:18). And, consider Peter's words, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation" (I Peter 4:12,13). Therefore, be courageous "...for He Himself has said, I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU" (Hebrews 13:5b).

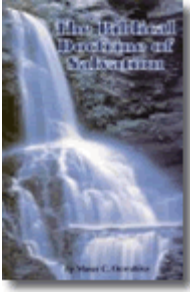
Progress Report

Our purpose is to inform and bring you up-to-date about what God is doing for and through this ministry. Our hearts are filled with gratitude and thanksgiving for His indelible work. When you approach His throne in prayer, please remember Grace Evangelistic Ministries. Praise Him for His work through us; our work is nothing apart from His grace.

USA

God continues to glorify Himself through Grace Evangelistic Ministries. Demand for our publications has increased tremendously. Requests from prison inmates have tripled over last year. Some have responded to the gospel by faith alone in Christ alone. Others have been challenged to seek out accurate Bible teaching. We have referred many, who request doctrine on tapes or literature for their daily studies, to R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries. We cannot thank God enough for what He is doing.

NEW PUBLICATION



By the grace of God, we have published a new book: *The Biblical Doctrine of Salvation*. This publication presents the Biblical doctrine presented by Moses C. Onwubiko in "Grace News Today," volumes 1-14. We believe that this book will help everyone who wants to understand more about salvation. Very importantly, it will help thousands of pastors in Africa who have entered the ministry with little knowledge of the Word of God. Many of these pastors can hardly afford a good Bible translation, let alone Greek or Hebrew study tools.

OVERSEAS

Today, our mailing list includes addresses from Australia, United Kingdom, Canada, Scotland, Philippines, China, India, Egypt, Germany, Croatia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Gambia, and Nigeria—just to name a few. Many are pastors. The list grows as God takes His doctrinal truth to those who are positive. This underlines the justice, fairness, and matchless grace of God, who removes any linguistic, racial, cultural, and geographical barriers to make Himself known to anyone who desires to know and have relationship with Him. We are witnessing the grace of God as it unfolds. We consider it a great privilege to be an instrument through which God brings the gospel to unbelievers and Bible doctrine to those who have personally trusted in Christ.

God Will Provide Genesis 22:8

"God will provide" is the attitude of Grace Evangelistic Ministries. We do not beg for money. We believe that if this ministry is honoring to God, He will provide EVERYTHING necessary for its continuation. "God will provide" was Abraham's reassurance to his confused son, Isaac (Genesis 22:8). When God gives an assignment to us as His servants, He is under obligation to provide for the job. When God does not provide, it could mean one of three things. One, God may not want the job accomplished at that particular time. Two, it could mean that those who are to carry out the mission are not prepared to do so yet. Lastly, it could be a sign that God does not want to have any part of the ministry; therefore, it is absolutely foolish and arrogant for us as believers to try to devise a way to accomplish a task in the name of God when He has already rejected it. For example, when we use gimmicks to manipulate people to contribute money, we are not glorifying God. It is blasphemy on our part to think that God does not know how to provide for the work that He has assigned. Take a moment and think about the following question: When we work to accomplish a job that God has rejected, who will be glorified in the end? God? Or me?

A believer in the Lord once said, "God's work, done in God's way, will have God's provision."

BRIEF REPORT—PART TWO

(Submitted by Darlington E. Elekwa—Africa chapter president)

JOS:
BACK TO THE BIBLE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

The theme of this second edition of our annual conference in Jos is Blessing in Time and in Eternity. It was held in two parts: April 30 - May 4 for ministers and church workers nationwide; and May 7th - 12th General Conference.

This year's conference witnessed an unprecedented turn out, so much so that next year's organizers will have to secure a larger and more spacious conference hall. We are grateful to God for using His chosen servant to reach such a crowd at this historic time in our country. It must be observed that many who were rather skeptical at the early stage of Grace Evangelistic Ministries in Jos are now coming around. Their level of participation in God's work through G.E.M is a profound testimony to the effects and influence of Bible doctrine accurately presented to the lives of those who are positive. We no longer need to toil in the area of elaborate adverts before an audience is formed. Instead, inquiries stream into our office in Jos, daily, by those who would like to participate in our programs. These people book way ahead to participate in God's work.

Children's Gospel Activities:

For three consecutive days, Mrs. Debby Hagar had a good time with school children from three different geographical locations in Jos. These kids wanted Debby to stay in Nigeria and share with them the gospel and Bible lessons on a regular basis. Our meeting in Jos was wrapped up on May 12, the same day Africa chapter vice president left Jos to attend his wife's funeral. It would be recalled that Mrs. Iheoma Ibeji was our Administrative Secretary at G.E.M's Africa HQ. She went to be with the Lord on April 4, 2001. Please pray for her husband and four children she left behind.

We are grateful to Mr. Nelson Ibeji, Pastor Tony Sani, Rev. Vincent Maduekwe, Mrs. Ngozi Onu, and Mrs. Ngozi Elekwa who put Jos program together. We also thank Vincent and Rev. Emeruwa.

Our heart's desire, for which we earnestly pray, is that God would grant us grace through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to keep translating the mission and vision of Grace Evangelistic Ministries into practical reality, not only in Nigeria but also elsewhere across the globe.

LETTER FROM PRISON

*Dear Grace Evangelistic Ministries,
Greetings in Christ:*

*We are a small prison facility of about 500 men. I have read your books and would like to request some copies for my office. I would like copies of *Riding the Death Train*, *Comfort in Suffering*, and *God's Plan After Salvation*.*

Thank you so much. I appreciate all that you do for us.

Sincerely,

REPORT FROM NIGERIA

Prepared and forwarded by pastor Tony Sani

There has been a tremendous increase in demand for doctrinal literature and audio tapes since our last report. We have had more new people come to our office this period than before. More ministers, pastors, and church members are being introduced to our ministry on a regular basis. We can only attribute such increase to God who makes Himself known to anyone who is hungry to know Him. As soon as individuals come in contact with our material, they rush to us for their own copies. What is striking are the testimonies of many of these recipients. Some pastors admit that they are undergoing a theological training through G.E.M. Some also say that they have never seen a ministry like Grace Evangelistic Ministries before—a ministry that distributes doctrinal material without charging for them!

The testimonies that we receive on a daily basis confirm that our ministry is really changing many lives both within and beyond. To God we give the glory.

Here are just a few of the testimonies:

"I thank God for using you to cause a change in my life and others who have come in contact with your publications. Your doctrinal materials have changed a lot of people for good. I experienced God's grace when I was reading one of your publications, "Comfort in Suffering." The moment I finished reading it, my life took a "U" turn; and I responded to the message and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. I need more doctrinal books to help me grow spiritually."

T.J, Lagos State Nigeria

"Thank God for Grace Evangelistic Ministries' free distribution of doctrinal books, audio tapes, and other materials to believers in this difficult time. This is real spiritual reinforcement that God will water. I appreciate the way you apply the principles of grace. Many people have been blessed because of your ministry.

Reading your books, listening to your tapes and lectures I believe will help one to remain faithful to the work of God. I enjoy your materials very much. I wish you all the best in your ministries."

Pastor C. R. ECWA Theological Seminary, Plateau State, Nigeria

"I really thank God for the knowledge and wisdom He imparted to you to write the book "Comfort in Suffering." In fact, it inspires me most whenever I read it. I would like to receive your other publications and audio tapes for my use and other churches of God under me. I also have chosen you as my mentor in spiritual matters."

Pastor M.O., Abia State, Nigeria

"It is my greatest pleasure to say "a big thank you" to you and all with you in your ministry. Thank you for the four books that your office sent to me. Such acts of love are not left unrewarded. The Almighty God will bless you and grant you an everlasting peace and joy. I

would like you to send more doctrinal books, for the ones you sent to me opened my eyes and others to the truth. Also, I would like to receive Rev. Moses C. Onwubiko's teaching on tapes. We will be praying for your work in the Lord to flourish and bring in great harvest of souls."

I.M., Imo State, Nigeria

Letters to Grace Evangelistic Ministries

We would like to share some of the letters that have been sent to us. As you read these letters, please join us in giving thanks to our gracious God who does all the work: "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

Our purpose in sharing these letters with you is to show you that your partnership in financial and prayer support for this ministry is indeed producing dividends for the glory of our merciful God.

Dear ones in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

The spiritual literature you sent us is finished; and they touched many hearts. I believe it was God's divine purpose to bring into existence Grace Evangelistic Ministries to assist in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. It is an urgent issue and time is racing against us and yet the world must hear the message of salvation.

Please send us more literature. We are praying for your ministry and its works.

*D.G. Harare, **Zimbabwe***

Dear Rev. Moses,

*Yesterday I just received my newsletter. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for using you to teach sound doctrine properly to all who are interested. I study each newsletter prayerfully, and I have taken upon myself not to keep these teachings to myself. I now have Bible study groups with people who want to learn sound Bible doctrine. I teach them using the materials from the newsletters. I, therefore, sincerely request three (3) copies of the new publication: *Biblical Doctrine of Salvation*. I will use this as the handbook for my discipleship workshops. I will continue to pray that your ministry will reach more and more people of this planet earth. And I wish to inform the Grace Evangelistic Ministries' team that their services are so great that only God will reward them.*

May God bless you richly.

*D.N., **Cameroon***

Gratitude for Answered Prayers

"Devote yourselves to prayers, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

Please join us in thanking our Heavenly Father for graciously answering the following prayers:

1. For helping us meet our financial obligations for the conferences held in Nigeria April - May 2001
2. For giving our missionary team journey-mercies and success in the April/May conference in Nigeria
3. For the faithfulness of our partners in the area of financial and prayer support.
4. For the spiritual food which He provides for the positive believers around the World.
5. For the freedom and stability we enjoy here in America.

Bible Doctrine for Thought

"The greatest use of life is to spend it on something that will outlast it." We arrived here naked. "We brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either" (I Timothy 6:7). The only thing we can take with us is our spiritual accomplishment by means of the Holy Spirit. What is your spiritual accomplishment? Are you making spiritual deposits into your account in Heaven-something that will outlast your life when you die? You may wish to pause and meditate on this.

Here is the Truth

CAN GOD ALLOW A BELIEVER TO SUFFER?

We will consult the Scripture for the answer. Many evangelists have misled multitudes by telling them that once they believe in Christ their lives will be suffering-free. That's misrepresentation of the gospel message. On the contrary, suffering is on the main menu in our spiritual journey. The scripture says, "...Through many [sufferings] we must enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22b). Paul puts it this way: "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, **NOT ONLY TO BELIEVE IN HIM, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE**" (Philippians 1:29).

Suffering for Christ's sake is a great honor. The apostles were brutally flogged-Roman style-for preaching the gospel (Acts 5:40). Here is the rest of Luke's account: "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name" (v. 41).

When a believer enters what I call the "School of God's Glorification" through faith alone in Christ alone, suffering is a required course. No one is exempt! The believer has a choice though; he can take the course of God's approved suffering or his own, namely the self-induced misery course. The former is bearable because God has provided divine solutions: Bible doctrine and the omnipotence of the Holy Spirit. "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" Matt 11:30.

The only grace solution for self-induced misery is I John 1:9, which clearly states, "If we confess our sins [whatever sins that ruptured our fellowship with God], He is faithful [because these sins were judged on the cross] and righteous to forgive us our sins and to [purify] us from all [wrongdoing]." Once a believer's fellowship has been restored, and he has spiritual capacity through daily perception and application of Bible doctrine, sooner or later he will be registered

to take the course.

One may ask, "Why take this course?" The Bible has an answer: "It is a trustworthy statement: If we died with Him Christ-and certainly we did], we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, [continue to fail the course of suffering], He will also deny us [the privilege of ruling with Him along with other privileges including the privilege of eating "the tree of life in, which is the Paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7)]" (II Timothy 2:11,12). Another reason is that God's approved suffering assists the believer in developing spiritual capacity to love God and to enjoy life's relationships in marriage and friendship-even capacity for blessing from God-blessing that is "...exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think..." (Ephesians 3:20b).

Now we can begin to comprehend the meaning of, "Blessed [happy] is a man [any believer] who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved [by the bar of eternal justice, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit], he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him [those who will pass the course of suffering throughout the duration of their spiritual life]" (James 1:12).

The Good News

When our Lord Jesus Christ was on the cross, He had you on His mind. All sins, including those you have not yet committed, were poured out on Jesus Christ, and He was judged for each and every one in your place (I Peter 2:24). The penalty has already been paid. He endured the judgment for all the sins of the world to pave the way for you to have eternal life through faith in Him. No matter how sinful you have been, you can be forgiven and your slate wiped clean by God. How? By telling God right now that you are believing in His Son, Jesus Christ. The moment you do this, you share God's eternal life forever. The Bible says, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31). "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). Will you believe in Him today? Or will you reject Him? The decision is entirely yours.

Would You Join Us in Prayer?

GRACE EVANGELISTIC MINISTRIES' PRAYER GROUP

The importance of prayer cannot be over emphasized!

The God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, gave us a perfect example to follow. His life and earthly ministry was encapsulated in a lifestyle of prayer. Prayer occupied a place of singular importance in His own life and teaching. In time of decision and crisis He gave Himself to prayer. Thus our Lord prayed when He was baptized (Luke 3:21,22); when He chose the twelve disciples: "It was at this time that He [Jesus Christ] went off to the mountain to pray and He spent the whole night in prayer to God [the Father]" (Luke 6:12,13); when He was transfigured (Luke 9:29); when He was engaging in sustained and exhausting service: "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place (*for privacy*), and was praying there." (Mark 1:35-39); when He called forth Lazarus from the grave (John 11:41); when He was burdened for Simon Peter (Luke 22:31-32); when He faced

betrayal, execution, and divine abandonment, and thus the Scripture recorded: “And He withdrew from them [His disciples] about a stone’s throw, and he knelt down and began to pray...And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground” (Luke 22:41,44). He prayed when He thought of His disciples and their future ministry (John 17) and before His physical death (Luke 23:46). Therefore, if you are a believer who finds it difficult to spend a time with our heavenly Father, sin no more. “Far be it from that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).

If Jesus Christ, a perfect God and a perfect Man spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12-13), we the mortal believers should spend all year in Prayer!

- In light of the importance of prayer, would join us as we pray for:
- More open doors for our ministry
- The student-pastors in seminary
- The sustenance and growth of the churches we formed
- U.S.A
- Israel and the Middle East conflict
- Partners-that God would continue to meet their needs
- R. B. Thieme Jr., and his ministry
- Success in our missionary endeavors in this year of our Lord 2001
- Protection as we travel
- Continued provision for our ministry and others that serve Him faithfully

Financial Policy

Grace Evangelistic Ministries does not solicit funding. God in His grace continues to meet our financial burdens through His children who have passion for a lost and dying world.

We do not charge for books or audio tapes. No money is requested. Anyone desiring to receive our books, tapes or other spiritual materials can receive them at absolutely no cost. God has graced us out and we wish to reflect His grace.

When gratitude for the Word of God and understanding of the need to reach unsaved souls with the simple grace gospel and sound Bible teaching motivate you to contribute, you have the privilege of giving and sharing in the dissemination of the Word of God. This is a grace ministry.

We do not solicit funds for two reasons:

1. It is not a correct application of Bible doctrine to make anyone feel guilty because he has not given to the Lord's work.
 2. When God motivates believers to support this ministry without any gimmicks on our part, it becomes a litmus test that what we are doing is honoring Him. We believe that if God has given us an assignment, we shouldn't beg for money to accomplish it. Conversely, that means He is under obligation to provide for the work.
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Note: Scriptures cited in this work are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Words and phrases in brackets are solely the author's.

Our Grace Ministry Has No Limits

Therefore, if you would like to be on our mailing list to receive this bi-monthly issue, "Grace News Today", or other materials of spiritual value, please write to the following address:

Grace Evangelistic Ministries

P. O. Box 17246

Nashville, TN 37217-7246

or

call us at **(615) 365-0015**

or

you may visit our web site

on the Internet at:

<http://www.gracemissions.org/>

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