



Reflections & Revelations Newsletter
(January 21, 2007)

GOD OF GRACE

1 Peter 5:10 - 11 (NKJV) ¹⁰But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*. ¹¹To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

This is a prayer by Peter for Jewish believers, but it is also a prayer for us today. The word on my heart these days is "grace." Awhile back, at choir rehearsal, we were in a time of praise and worship, and the words from a song we sing were so engrained in my heart that I began to sing them out loud. I'm not sure who the song is by, but the words go something like, "There's a mighty river flowing, there's a mighty river flowing, there's a mighty river flowing in this place, and it's full of passion, full of power, full of glory, it's full of grace." Those words finally took on meaning in my heart as I sang them to the Lord and myself that night.

When I got up the next morning, I was working on finishing my devotional reading from two days prior, feeling kind of guilty that I was behind. Yet, as I sat there, I felt like it was the perfect timing for me to read this scripture, because that day, it meant something to me. So, I wanted to take a moment to dig just a little deeper into what Peter is truly praying. Why? Because, lately, I am fully convinced how successful we are in this Christian walk depends upon our understanding of our "God of all grace."

First, let's define what that word "*grace*" means here. When I looked it up in Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries,¹ I found many meanings, one of which is "the divine influence upon the heart, and it's reflection in the life; including *gratitude*." Some of the other meanings are: "acceptable," "benefit," "favour," "gift," "joy liberality," "pleasure," and "thank, thanks, and thankworthy." Okay. I can understand that. But, I want to know how it applies to me. How does God's grace apply to my life? How does this mighty river flowing full of grace apply to me?

Romans 5:1 - 5 (NKJV) ¹Therefore, having been justified by faith, ²[£]we have peace with God through **our Lord Jesus Christ**, ³**through whom also we have access by faith into this grace** in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ⁴And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; ⁵and perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁶Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (Bold emphasis added)

Now, I'm getting somewhere. God is the one Who has all grace. I have access to this grace by my faith in Jesus Christ. From both of these scriptures, it appears this grace is to help me get through my "trials" that I may glorify God. What I find interesting in both

¹ James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D., *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Iowa Falls, World Bible Publishers, 1986).

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of these scriptures is that neither one of them says I won't "suffer," but both of them speak to my heart that God's grace will help me as I "suffer." They also speak to my heart that I should not focus on the "how" as much as the "what." In other words, it's not the circumstances that matter, but the fact that God is doing something in our lives. So, what He is doing? Let's go back to 1 Peter for a moment. He is perfecting, establishing, strengthening, and settling me, and I find myself wondering what each of these words mean?

Perfect. I was not expecting what I found when I looked it up. Honestly, I was expecting to see something about maturity, since I know that is one of the definitions of the word "perfect" in the Bible. I was not expecting to find "to *complete thoroughly*, that is, *repair* (literally or figuratively) or *adjust*," nor was I expecting to find words like "fit," "frame," "mend," "prepare," or "restore." So, my paradigm got shifted! But, what did I learn from this. Peter is asking the "God of all grace" to thoroughly complete, repair, prepare, and restore believers AFTER they have suffered awhile. This is a Selah moment for me.

Establish. I find this to be a very interesting word. It means to "set fast." What I learned is the literal meaning is "to *turn resolutely* in a certain direction," and the figurative meaning is "to *confirm*." So, let me put this in words I can understand. I am to turn from something towards something, and then be dug in like an Alabama tick once I get there. Plus, what I turn towards should confirm me. Now, I must admit, I am tempted to go deeper here, but I think I will move on to the next word, so I can get a bigger picture.

Strengthen. Okay. That was indeed enlightening, because the figurative meaning for "strengthen" is "*confirm* (in spiritual knowledge and power)." That is definitely not what I was expecting to find, but it makes total sense. If we don't have spiritual knowledge, we don't know how to do what **James 4:7** tells us: "⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (NKJV). We cannot submit to God if we do not know what God is asking us to do and vice versa. If we do not know what God is asking us to do, we cannot resist the devil, because we're not sure who's talking to us! That takes us right back to **1 Peter 5:8-9**:

⁸Be sober, be vigilant; ⁸because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (NKJV).

With what I've learned in this study, I have a fresh perspective on these scriptures in James and 1 Peter. I need both the knowledge and the power to resist the devil. I also am noticing there is a flow here in the way this process works: perfect, establish, strengthen, and THEN settle. I won't go into all of the details of the words we have already looked at, but I will say there is definitely something stirring in my heart because of it. May the Holy Spirit lead and guide as He teaches us what He would have us to learn. For now, let's look at our last word: "settle."

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Settle. Whoa. This made me develop a brand new appreciation for the dynamics of words and what they can mean, because this is by the far the most surprising one of all for me. Literally what Peter is praying is that God will “*lay a basis* for.” In a figurative sense, Peter is praying that God will “consolidate,” or “lay a foundation.” And, we know from **1 Corinthians 3:11** that we can lay no other foundation except that which is Christ Jesus! So, where do we find ourselves?

The God of all grace is seeking to repair and adjust us, as we turn from something to something that will confirm us. That confirmation will strengthen us in our spiritual knowledge and power, and it will lay a foundation in our lives that will give all glory and dominion to Jesus Christ! Are we willing to allow God to make those adjustments in our lives? If the early believers were willing to lay down their lives for God, I pray we are willing to lay down “self” for Him! Thus, I close with Peter’s prayer for all who read this:

¹⁰But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. ¹¹To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen (**1 Peter 5:10 - 11 NKJV**).

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