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# Amazing Grace

## *Favorites*

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### *About This Book...*

Since the first issue in January, 1963, the monthly Bible study/devotional booklet "Amazing Grace" has been consistent. Edited by Pastor Win Johnson until he went Home in 1993, it was his conviction that the way Saints could become established and increase their 'devotion' to the Lord was to spend time studying the Word every day.

The monthly booklet has been unique in that the writers have been committed to the preaching and teaching of "Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the Mystery" [Romans 16:25]. We are grateful for their faithfulness to God and His Word as they have shared their insight with all of us.

In looking back through forty-eight years of articles, we have been encouraged, inspired and blessed again and again.

Now as we present a one-year book with 366 'favorites', it is our prayer that the Lord will use it to bring blessing to *your* life in a special way.

*Ron Achtyes*

## MAKING SALVATION KNOWN

*Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 5:20*

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" ( II Corinthians 5:19). This is our charge as believers. We should pray as Paul did for boldness to make known the message for today. There are many ways we can spread the gospel of grace such as handing out tracts, etc. An effective way to explain salvation is through personal testimony. We need not know theological terms or conditions, but simply explain what God has done for us.

A simple outline one can use in making salvation known is:

1. The fact of sin. (Romans 3:23)
2. The penalty for sin. (Romans 6:23), (Romans 5:12)
3. The penalty for sin must be paid. (Hebrews 9:27).
4. The penalty for sin was paid by the Lord Jesus Christ (II Corinthians 5:21).
5. We must believe and receive the gift of salvation (John 1:12) (Romans 5:1).

"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" ( I Corinthians 15:1-4).

*Notes:*

*JB*

## SAVED BY GRACE

*Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:8-10*

An essential truth that must be understood in a study of salvation is that we are saved by grace. Someone defined God's grace as receiving from God that which we do not deserve, could never earn and can never repay. We are not saved by who we are or what we have done, but by Who God is and what He has done on our behalf. "For He hath made Him (The Lord Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

According to Paul in I Corinthians 15, the good news by which we are saved is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. We are to accept this by faith. Saving faith is trusting God in spite of the circumstances or the consequences. The wonderful part about it is that this salvation is available to anyone. We read in Titus 2:11 that, "the grace of God that bringeth salvation (makes salvation available) hath appeared (or shines forth) to all men" (that is all men without distinction). The only question that remains dear reader is, have you appropriated this truth of salvation by grace as your very own? If not, I would encourage you to do so right now.

*JB*

*Notes:*

## HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY

*Scripture Reading: Genesis 1:1*

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." With these majestic words, the Lord not only states the origin of all things, He also gives us the key to understanding the Bible. For you see, the Bible is the record of God's two great plans: His earthly program for Israel and all the Gentiles saved in ages past, and His heavenly program for the Church, the Body of Christ.

In previous ages, the hope of the saints was to live on a renewed earth with God as their King. In the depths of his pain and suffering, Job was able to cry out, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26). King David expressed the hope of Old Testament Israel in Psalm 37:11, "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Christ echoed these words as He preached His famous Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

It is not until God interrupted His earthly program and raised up a new apostle for the Gentiles that we learn of a heavenly people. Paul writes to us, the members of the Body of Christ, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). Furthermore, he informs us that even now, God "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).

Joel Finck

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## PROPHECY AND MYSTERY

*Scripture Reading: Acts 3:21, Romans 16:25*

Bible teachers have long operated under the faulty assumption that the main division of Scripture is "Old Testament and New Testament." We have frequently heard or read the statement, "the Old Testament is for the Jews, and the New Testament is for us." Furthermore, there is a common but incorrect notion that the Old Testament begins with Genesis 1:1, and the New Testament begins with Matthew 1:1. This misconception comes from the title pages added by man, not from the pages of Scripture itself.

The fact is, that the "Old Testament" (or the Law) doesn't begin until Exodus 20:1, when God revealed it to Moses; and the New Testament doesn't begin until the death of Christ. (See Matthew 26:28.) Even then, this is the New Testament (or covenant) made "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31).

The true division of Scripture is prophecy and the mystery. When the apostle Peter spoke to the Israelites of his day, he offered them the return of Christ and the restitution of all things, telling them that all this was "spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." (See Acts 3:19-21.) On the other hand, the apostle Paul wrote to the Gentiles about "the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25). It is clear that Peter and Paul were referring to two different messages, for something cannot be "spoken" and "kept secret" at the same time. As we "rightly divide the Word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15), we must recognize the mystery revealed to Paul as our private "mail" for today!

JF

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## THE TWELVE AND PAUL

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 19:28; Romans 11:13*

Can you name the twelve apostles? Most of us probably cannot get past Peter, James, and John with perhaps a few adding Matthew, Thomas and maybe Judas. While it doesn't surprise us that many folks cannot name all twelve apostles, it is amazing how many people think that Paul is one of them. The truth of the matter is that Paul is *not* one of the twelve apostles; and furthermore, his apostleship is of an entirely different nature than that of the twelve.

The twelve apostles are the apostles of Israel. In Matthew 19:28, the Lord promised them, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Of course, Judas was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1:15-26, but nowhere is it said that Paul will sit upon one of those twelve thrones. This is because the apostle Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles: "For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office" (Romans 11:13). It is unfortunate, even tragic, that the church has for many centuries minimized that office which God intended to magnify.

In the Galatian epistle, Paul again emphasizes the clear distinction between Peter's apostleship and his own: "For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision (Jews), the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:8). Let us be careful to maintain the distinct ministries of the twelve and Paul!

JF

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## UNDER LAW OR UNDER GRACE?

*Scripture Reading: Romans 6:14*

People are always looking for an excuse to sin. If they can somehow justify their sin with Scripture, so much the better—or so they think. Paul knew that God's super-abounding grace would probably be misused by some to become lax about sin. Therefore, immediately after informing us that we "are not under the law, but under grace," he quickly added, "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:14, 15).

We should thank God we are not under the law! No longer are we required to bring animal sacrifices as an offering for sin. No more do we live in the bondage of the Mosaic code, which spelled out every detail of life and threatened death for those who slipped. What freedom we have in Christ!

Yet Christian liberty was never designed to give us freedom to sin, rather, it was meant to give us freedom to serve. "For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

Indeed, when we exercise genuine Christian love, we actually fulfill in a practical way that which the Law could never produce; that is, experiential righteousness. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). While so many today are trying to live by law, let us who know the grace of God live by grace and thereby demonstrate to a dying world what the power of God can do in the life of a yielded believer.

JF

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