

# 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*

"Study  
to show thyself  
approved unto God,  
a workman that  
needeth  
not to be ashamed,  
rightly dividing  
the word of  
truth."

II Timothy 2:15



## IN ME FIRST

*Scripture Reading: I Timothy 1:15, 16*

Who was the first member of the body of Christ? Theologians have long debated this question, coming up with such answers as, "John the Baptist," "the Twelve Apostles," or even "Adam." While we do not question the salvation of any of these (except Judas), none of them were saved under the current administration of grace which was committed to Paul (Ephesians 3:1, 2).

The Scriptures are clear that Paul's salvation was the first of its kind. "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that *in me first* Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (I Timothy 1:16). That is, Paul was the first to obtain mercy during the time of God's longsuffering. When is the time of God's longsuffering? Is it this present dispensation of grace in which God's wrath of the tribulation period is being delayed. According to the prophecies of the Old Testament, the day of God's wrath should have come and gone long ago. But in His Grace, God postponed His wrath and revealed a secret program among the Gentiles (Romans 11:25).

Paul is the pattern of salvation today, in that he was saved by the pure grace of God even as he rebelled against Christ. It was not his obedience to the law, or turning to God that saved him, even as these things do not save us. We, as Paul, can only be saved by believing the record God gave him, "that all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). Have you trusted the finished work of Christ for your salvation?

JF

Notes:

## GRACE LIVING

*Scripture Reading: Galatians 3:2, 3*

Many say they believe in salvation by grace through faith, but they retreat to legalism and the power of the flesh when it comes to living the Christian life. The Apostle Paul addressed this very problem among the Galatians. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:2, 3).

Pastors and churches are often the worst offenders when it comes to imposing laws on our congregations. We want to see the saints living holy lives, so we tend to formulate sets of "rules" which, if obeyed, will produce the "model Christian." These rules may be noble and righteous, and may truly represent a godly lifestyle; but the danger comes when people conform to our standard simply to please man. This leads to pride and a Pharisaical attitude which says, "come not near to me; for I am holier than thou." (See Isaiah 65:5.)

God's method of sanctification (holy living) is the same as His method of salvation: by faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). When we saturate ourselves with the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to apply His Word to our lives, we will live Godly in Christ Jesus without even trying. This is the principle of fruit bearing which Paul explains in Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." etc. We do not have to post a set of rules in front of a fruit tree; we just water it and fertilize it, and God does the rest. So it should be with the believer!

JF

Notes:



**SALVATION:  
BEGINNING OR END OF FAITH?**

*Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:13, I Peter 1:9*

Are you saved? Those who have placed their faith in the finished work of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:3, 4) can confidently answer, "Yes! I am saved!"

One of the blessings of grace is that our salvation is sealed the moment we believe: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). The proper sense of the words, "after that ye believed" is literally "upon believing" (Greek aorist tense). This means that your salvation was sealed by the Holy Spirit at the very moment you believed. Praise the Lord for this blessed truth!

However, as the apostle Peter writes to the Jewish "sojourners of the dispersion" (I Peter 1:1) who belonged to the kingdom program, he speaks of "Receiving the *end* of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I Peter 1:9). This is entirely in keeping with the principle our Lord taught as He ministered to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:6). He reminded His disciples that "he that endureth to the *end* shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22, confer with Matthew 24:13).

How important it is to explain this distinction to our "insecure" friends who may feel that they cannot know for sure if they are saved until their death or the Lord's return. Just as we must use the writings of Paul to properly understand the doctrine and calling of the church, the Body of Christ, so we must be Pauline when it comes to our understanding of salvation.

JF

Notes:

**BEWARE OF DOGS!**

*Scripture Reading: Mark 7:27, 28; Philippians 3:2*

When approached by a Gentile woman in need of help, our Lord said to her, "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it unto the dogs" (Mark 7:27). Dogs! Is this our sensitive, loving and caring Lord who is speaking? Yes, indeed! But rather than taking offense, this woman readily acknowledged her place as a Gentile "dog," saying, "Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs" (Mark 7:28). Recognizing her faith, the Lord granted her request.

Are the Gentiles still considered "dogs" by the Lord today? No, now the tables have turned. In Philippians 3:2, Paul writes, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." God refers to the "concision" as dogs, but who are the concision? Actually, Paul is using a play on words here, based on the word *circumcision*. As Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God, the Judaizers [those attempting to continue in the Jewish laws] often followed at a distance ready to impose circumcision on new believers. (See Acts 15:1.) Since circumcision is not a part of God's program today, this practice--when used for a religious ceremony--becomes nothing but a mutilation of the flesh; and this is precisely the meaning of the word *concision*. Paul tells the Philippians to watch out for Judaizing "dogs" who would mutilate their flesh in the name of religion.

We can thank God that we Gentiles who were once considered "dogs" are now sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ!

JF

Notes:



## RAPTURE IN THE FOUR GOSPELS?

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:40, Luke 17:36, 37*

The very thought of the Rapture brings excitement to the child of God, for it offers the blessed hope of meeting the Lord "in the air" without suffering the pain of death. But for the lost, it means facing the horrors of tribulation as God pours out His wrath on this earth. Truly, the rapture will separate the saved from the lost, as one is taken and the other left.

It is easy to see how many Bible students have concluded that the Lord was referring to the Rapture when He said, "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left" (Matthew 24:40, confer with Luke 17:36). Yet, we need to ask the questions, which one is taken, and which one is left? At the rapture, it is the believer who is taken (I Thessalonians 4:14-17).

When the disciples asked the Lord where the one would be taken in Luke 17:37, Christ replied, "Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." This refers to the great feast which the fowls will have when the Lord destroys all unbelievers at His Second Coming (Revelation 19:17, 18). You see, Christ was not referring to the Rapture while He was on earth, but rather to the "revelation" of Himself as conquering King. It will not be the believers who are taken in that day, but the unbelievers who will be taken to death and judgment. The believers of the tribulation period will be left to enter the kingdom.

How important it is for us to "rightly divide the Word of truth" when it comes to the Rapture and the Second Coming. While one will be taken and one left at both events, the results will be very different!

JF

Notes:

## RAPTURE IN THE FOUR GOSPELS? (Part two)

*Scripture Reading: John 14:1-3*

Certainly one of the most beautiful passages of Scripture, John 14:1-3 has been used by many to demonstrate Christ's loving care and future provision for His own. Without diminishing the beauty of this passage in the least, it is important to see that it is not referring to the Rapture, as some would teach. "My Father's house" is often interpreted to mean "heaven." The "many mansions" are usually taken to be large homes lining heaven's streets; and receiving "you unto myself" is often assumed to be the "catching away" which Paul refers to in I Thessalonians 4:17, but a careful search of Scripture shows otherwise.

When casting out the money changers, Christ referred to the temple as "my Father's house" (John 2:16). Why should we interpret this expression differently a few chapters later? The word *mansions* in John 14:2 literally means an *abode* and is translated thus in verse twenty-three. The reference here is not to heaven, but to the millennial temple which will contain many "abodes" or "chambers." (See Ezekiel 40:7, 10, 12, 16, 17, etc.) As the twelve judges of the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28), the apostles will dwell in the temple in these abodes (or chambers) during their millennial reign. Furthermore, when Christ said He would come again and receive them unto Himself, He was in Jerusalem at the time. He says nothing about catching them away to heaven. No, Christ will come again to Jerusalem to reign as King with the twelve apostles reigning with Him.

It was through Paul that God revealed Christ's *secret* coming for the Church, His Body, to rapture the believers to heaven to dwell with Him forever.

JF

Notes: