

VICTORY BY GRACE*Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 15:54-57*

“Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God!” (I John 5:4-5). Carnal man has not the capacity nor the means to fortify himself against the destructive forces of this world. As vessels of clay, we know only discouragement and defeat. So long as we walk the earth, we are subject to its evils and temptations. Each of us has the same struggle as that described by the Apostle Paul.

“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD....For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 7:22-25, 8:2).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or peril, or sword!...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:35, 37).

“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory....The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

REH*Notes:***GRACE UNDER THE LAW***Scripture Reading: Romans 4:6-8*

“David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” David lived under the dispensation of the Law of Moses. He was obedient, and he was disobedient. He was faithful, and he was unfaithful. He was at times blessed by God; he was at times chastised by God.

Had it not been for the grace of God, surely this faithful but errant king could have destroyed himself by his many indiscretions. David’s boldest departure from the straight and narrow path, was committing adultery, followed by murdering the husband of the adulterous partner, then marrying the victim’s widow. “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (II Samuel 11:27). Of course, David was penitent: “Have mercy upon me, O God....Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:1-3).

“And David said unto [the prophet] Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die” (II Samuel 12:13). God tempered His grace by chastening the king through the death of the child of David’s illicit union but forgave him nevertheless.

Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba and newly enthroned King of Israel, prayed humbly for nothing more than wisdom to reign over God’s people. God displayed his pleasure by showering Solomon with added riches and long life....Abounding grace under the law!

REH*Notes:*

PERFECTION BY GRACE*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 10:12-14*

True perfection is not to be comprehended by the finite mind. While sojourning in this present world, we cannot conceive of such a thing as absolute perfection; it does not exist in the natural realm, for our observation. Positionally, we (believers) ARE perfect because we are members of Christ's Body, and HE is perfect. However, we are yet imprisoned in our bodies of flesh—until the day when He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Until that day, we will not know experientially the perfection of which we are assured.

“Christ...loved the Church, and gave Himself for it...that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25, 27). We are thus confident of our perfection as saints, knowing that “When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4).

As we, His children who are earthbound and enduring in this dispensation of His grace, await His glorious appearing, we are commanded to strive toward another goal of perfection—the continual process of spiritual maturation, both as individuals and as a sanctified body. “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Corinthians 7:1). “And be not conformed to this world...that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

*Notes:**REH***THE FRUITS OF GRACE***Scripture Reading: Galatians 5:22-24*

Any commendable characteristic of the believer is acquired only by grace. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.” “But Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Romans 7:18, Galatians 2:20).

That which is of the Spirit is by grace. Whatever we receive is by grace. By grace we are enabled to “walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” (Ephesians 5:15). “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Ephesians 5:9). “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (II Corinthians 9:8).

We are not left in the dark as to our appropriate conduct as believers. Our apostle admonishes us: “Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8)... A little much to expect of us poor mortals! “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance....and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 2:1).

*REH**Notes:*

PROMISES UNDER GRACE*Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 4:16-17*

In no other dispensation have believers received promises equal to those we have been given as members of the Body of Christ. Having been saved by His grace, we are assured that "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). This promise assures us of complete preservation and security in our position as the purchased possession of God. The Day of Jesus Christ is when "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). This means that nothing can prevent our safe arrival for that occasion.

We are commanded: "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; KNOWING THAT OF THE LORD YE SHALL RECEIVE THE REWARD OF THE INHERITANCE: FOR YE SERVE THE LORD CHRIST" (Colossians 3:23,24). We are thus left in no doubt whatever as to the fact of our appearance before the judgment seat of Christ. "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." "When Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Philippians 3:21, Colossians 3:4).

What a promise! We are "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds!"

*REH**Notes:***THE BLESSINGS OF GRACE***Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:2-3*

As Paul bade farewell to the saints at Ephesus, knowing that this was a sad and final parting, he comforted them, saying, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). God bestows many blessings on even the unregenerate, but it is those who are sanctified that receive the rich and satisfying spiritual blessings of which the apostle is speaking as he reassures the brethren.

The limitless scope of grace whereby we receive such blessing is often emphasized by Paul in his epistles. In the Ephesian letter he writes that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). And the assurance that this is so is our source of peace, which is in itself our greatest of all blessings. "For He [Christ] IS our peace" (Ephesians 2:14). We are even instructed as to how we may most fully enjoy the most precious of gifts. "Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6-7).

We are reminded, of course, that peace through prayer does not result from the granting of specific requests as we petition. "For we know not what to pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:26). This comforting assurance is what brings us peace.

*REH**Notes:*

THE HOPE OF ISRAEL

Scripture Reading: Acts 26:6-7, 28:20

Five times in the book of Acts the Apostle Paul mentions that the preaching of the resurrection was the reason for his difficulties. Four of these five times he refers to the resurrection as a hope, a future expectation. Then in his last reference to this issue, he refers to the resurrection as the hope of Israel.

There are many distinctions between the mystery program and the prophetic program. One relates to Heavenly Places; the other relates to the Earth. One involves a Body; the other involves a Nation. One follows Christ as the Head; the other follows Christ as the King. These distinctions are clearly revealed in God's Word; but in our zeal for these distinctions, we must not overlook the things that are common. Such as, that which is our "blessed hope" (our resurrection at the Rapture) is also the hope of Israel (their resurrection at the Second Coming).

When the Lord fulfills His *prophetic* promises, it will be a marvelous thing. The curse will be lifted from the earth. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Isaiah 11:9). It will be inhabited only by those who are righteous (Psalm 25:12-13), and it will be ruled directly by God (Zechariah 14:9).

But what about Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who died thousands of years ago? They never experienced these kingdom blessings. Yet, Matthew 8:11 tells us that they will be there in the kingdom of Heaven. What about the heroes of the faith listed in Hebrews 11 who died before they received the promise? They too will be there, as well as every other Old Testament saint. This could only be possible through resurrection, which is truly, the hope of Israel.

Jon D. Bekemeyer

Notes:

PATIENT HOPE

Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 1:3

If there is one area in which the Holy Spirit has to work overtime in my life, it is in the area of patience. It is one thing to hope in my Lord Jesus Christ, but it is quite another to hope patiently! You see, I have no hope or expectation in this world system. As Abraham, I acknowledge that I am a stranger and a pilgrim on earth. My citizenship is in Heaven. Hope? Yes. *Patient* hope? Well...

There are days when the cares of this present evil age press in so hard upon me that I have an impatient hope. Many times I find it hard to *wait* for the "glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). I am selfish enough to want Him to return *right now!* I identify with the Apostle Paul when he says that he would much rather depart and "be with Christ; which is far better" (Philippians 1:23)! Yet Paul had his personal desires postponed (Philippians 1:24-26) in order to minister to the saints. He willingly accepted this as God's will for his life. (Not a bad example!)

I am working on developing a *patient* hope. I am learning to view my world through God's perspective. Yes, I still have days when the Rapture is my deepest desire—to be with Him! I am also learning something of the long suffering and patience of God to rebellious mankind (II Peter 3:9). The more I understand God's plan for the ages, and my small part in it, the more He enables me to be patient in hope! The more we understand God's secret purpose in Christ, as revealed through our Apostle Paul, the more easily we can say, as our Lord, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

David Havard

Notes:

HOPE ABANDONED*Scripture Reading: Acts 27:20*

Hope is a word the meaning of which must be determined by the context in which it is used. In our Acts 27:20 passage, Luke records the events of the storm that caught the ship on which Paul was being transported to Rome. Because of the fury of the storm, Luke says, "all hope that we should be saved was then taken away." Some individuals have used this verse to imply there can come a time in one's life when he has passed all chance of receiving God's forgiveness. This passage isn't talking about spiritual salvation. Rather, Luke is saying the passengers had lost all hope of the ship withstanding the fury of the storm. They thought they would never walk upon dry land again.

What a contrast is seen between those whose hope was in their own strength and Paul whose hope was in his God. The majority of those on board this ship were pagan idolaters. When they came to the end of their own abilities, they had nothing upon which to trust. The contrast is seen in Paul's attitude. Paul knew he was a member of God's redeemed company of believers. Paul knew his God was able to deliver him, and the ship's company, from the storm.

Because of his steadfast faith in God's ability and truthfulness, Paul, although a prisoner of Rome, was able to restore the passengers' hope and encourage them that no one would lose his life. Paul was able to do this by assuring these passengers that his God had sent an angel to assure him that everyone on the ship would be delivered from death in the sea (Acts 27:23). When the truth of this revelation had come to pass, these people knew Paul served the true God of creation.

Let us be encouraged in the hope we have in Christ Jesus, for He is the One who has saved us and nothing can separate us from His love (Romans 8:38-39).

*Marvin Duncan**Notes:***HOPE BEYOND HOPE***Scripture Reading: Romans 4:18*

How big is your God? Man frequently limits his "gods." Polytheists, with their abundant gods, indicate that one isn't sufficient. But even Israel whose God was the Lord, frequently limited Him by fearing giants, making wrongful covenants, and murmuring. Today some professing "Christians" limit God in salvation through dependence on religious works and human understanding. Their manner of life is sometimes more by sight, feeling or common sense than the eternal truth of God's Word.

Abraham, the man of faith in Romans 4, had the audacity to believe in a God who promised big things. His wife laughed to herself at the promise because she knew better (Genesis 18:12). Humanly speaking, there was no hope, even for one child; and the promise of numerous children was ridiculous! But Abraham believed God based on the hope that was promised. From the human standpoint, he was hoping against hope. He was hoping where hope left off. He hoped beyond hope! But his faith was in the Almighty God who can give hope where none exists, for He is the God who makes the dead live and calls the non-existent into existence (verse 17). Abraham's God was big enough to give hope when none existed, and Abraham didn't doubt by unbelief. God could and did call forth a child from the dead reproductive systems of Abraham and Sarah.

Our salvation is truly hope beyond hope when all is considered. So if we can hope beyond hope for eternal life, we can do the same in our daily life and walk. Based on hope from God, we can live the adventure of hope beyond hope!

*Jeff Seekins**Notes:*

REJOICING IN HOPE

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:2, 12:12

Rejoicing in hope is something that only a child of God can do! If you can say "amen" to Romans 5:1, then verse 2 gives the practical side. Anyone in this dispensation of grace who has believed the "gospel of the grace of God" "...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" has a perfect, righteous, at-peace standing before God in Christ. This then affords us direct access into the very throne-room of grace any moment of the day or night! It is as we realize and rest in these things that we rejoice in the earnest anticipation of the glory of God.

As we reflect on this practical issue, we can see that our two passages, when considered together, give us an interesting perspective. Rejoicing in hope is both a privilege and a responsibility! The righteousness of Christ is something we have now by faith alone, as an eternal possession. Therefore, the glory of God is what we will share in for all of eternity. The latter is sure because of the former! So not only do we rejoice as often as we think of these precious things, but we should rejoice *continuously* because of them. How else should we act, seeing who we are in Christ and anticipating where we are going!

The believer then should never be "singing the blues." Think of Paul and Silas in jail at Philippi. Were they "singing the blues"? No, indeed. Acts 16:25 says, "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and *sang praises* unto God." Because of our position in Christ and the hope it gives, we rejoice—even in tribulations—because we have *peace* with God! In this we must rest—and rejoice—as we anticipate His glory.

Donald A. Webb

Notes:

THE HOPE OF CREATION

Scripture Reading: Romans 8:19-21

How fervently do we sing the familiar chorus, "This world is not my home; I'm only passing through"! We, as members of the Body of Christ, are suffering along with all of creation. There will come a time when all suffering shall cease and the restitution of all things will come to pass. Meanwhile, though all of creation "hopes" for its pain to cease, the saints of God live in expectation of the fulfillment of their promised claim to glory: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20). "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump... the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15:52). While we have assurance of eternal life in glory, the world does not; but we groan in sympathy— "until now."

Our Apostle writes of the "Lord Jesus Christ, *Who is our hope*" (I Timothy 1:1). Those without Christ can see no purpose or reason for their sufferings. They cry out in despair; they even rail against God. The solution to their dilemma is ever before them. There is yet time for them to avail themselves of the way of escape from the shackles of ceaseless doubt and destitution. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2b). "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (II Timothy 2:12).

Robert E. Hanna

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