

Amazing Grace

Favorites



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“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

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

ABOUNDING IN HOPE

Scripture Reading: Romans 15:13

Are you filled with God's joy and peace? Do you abound in the hope that God is able to take care of you? Are you experiencing daily victory through the power of the Holy Ghost? Although the world seems to be searching for these blessings, in reality, very few seem to enjoy the kind of victory our text reveals to be God's will for our lives.

As Paul wrote to the Gentiles at Rome, he wanted them to be filled with God's joy and peace; but he reminds them that this would not be found in anything, or anyone, other than "the God of hope." Our God can fill each one with these wonderful blessings but only "in believing." How marvelous that one's lineage or works are no longer important as they once were in Old Testament times! Now anyone can have peace with God simply by believing in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as his only hope for eternal life. Believing this wonderful truth brings such lasting peace to the heart, that it fills the soul with joy.

To equip us for daily victory, God has given us the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Through His power, we can "abound in hope" as we allow Him to work in our lives. This hope is not a fanciful wishing for something good to happen to us. Rather, it is a confident expectation that God will one day raise our body incorruptible to dwell in heavenly places. In the meantime, our soul rests in knowing "that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28). Based on all that God has already done and promised to do for us, believers should be the most optimistic people in the world! Yes, joy, peace, and abounding in hope all emanate, not from ourselves, but from "the power of the Holy Ghost" within. "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow!"

John Fredericksen

Notes:

PAUL'S HOPE IN THE MINISTRY

Scripture Reading: Philippians 1:20

Paul's salvation (or deliverance) in verse 19, of which he was so sure, is interesting to consider in light of his last statement in verse 20: "...so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." On one hand, Paul's anticipation was to be released from prison, so he could continue to minister the things of Christ to the Philippians. On the other hand, according to his expectation and hope, even if he died for the cause of Christ, his hope and message would not be put to shame. Either way, Paul counted it deliverance. It was a no-lose situation. Paul had a confidence that the Lord was not through with Him yet (verse 25). Even so, he was ready to put it all on the line; and let the Lord take care of the details. Paul's hope gave him great boldness; and in this boldness, he was ready to magnify the Lord.

We who know Christ as our personal Saviour realize that we are seated with Him in the heavenlies and that He will bring us to glory. He will surely fulfill this hope. No matter what befalls us, we know this is true. This is the primary aspect to our hope. The secondary aspect is that we know as we are living for Him and bold to speak for Him, He will use us for His glory now, whether it be by life or by death! Though it may seem that this is just speaking to elders or those in "the ministry," may I say that we are all in the ministry of Christ. We are all supposed to be serving the Lord full-time, therefore we will all suffer for Him (verses 27-30). We like Paul must realize, through our earnest expectation and hope, that in no aspect of our service for Christ shall we be put to shame. May this give us great boldness!

Donald A. Webb

Notes:

THE HOPE OF SALVATION

Scripture Reading: I Thessalonians 5:8

"Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation." The darkness of nighttime is used by righteous people for sleep and by evil people to cover their wicked deeds. The righteous, therefore, want to use the daytime to assist in their activities which they do for the glory of God. Faith and love are a breastplate to protect the "heart" with its emotions when that faith and love is centered in God. The hope mentioned in I Thessalonians 5:8 is a helmet in that it protects the "mind" from doubt and fear. How can this be? Remember that this hope of salvation is the *absolute certainty* that God has done something for our salvation, and that it has been applied to us personally by Himself.

Nowhere in the Bible is it more sure that the word "hope" is used of a definite reality, not just wishful desire, for salvation. Some desire for salvation would only turn into doubt and fear when examined. A *desire* would not be a helmet for the head! It would leave the head exposed to the enemy.

This "hope of salvation" is truly the "certainty of salvation," which is the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in giving us the assurance that the Lord Jesus died for our sins, and that He has given us illumination to understand it "according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." One has written, "The certainty of our personal salvation, and the certainty of the truthfulness of the gospel message which brought us our salvation, are one!" If you know that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, will you trust Him now for your salvation?

John McKay

Notes:

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE

Scripture Reading: I Timothy 1:1

According to Webster, the word *hope* describes a "feeling that what is wanted will happen." People can endure many difficult circumstances in life if they believe things will improve, if they have *hope*.

In the Bible, the word *hope* certainly embodies the idea of anticipating better things, but it goes even further than that. In common usage the word *hope* has an element of doubt but not so in God's Word. It is, as Vine puts it, "favorable and confident expectation." As believers, we are absolutely sure of wonderful things in the future. How can we be so sure? Our text has the answer— the Lord Jesus Christ is our *hope*! He Himself guarantees good things to come.

Too often we have the problem of wanting it all NOW. But remember this— what Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:8 was a firm rebuke: "Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." The rebuke came because this is not the time to reign; this is the time to suffer (Romans 8:18 et. al.). Indeed we are told in II Timothy 2:12 that if we are to reign with Him, we must *first* suffer with Him.

Does this mean that we have an excuse to be negative, downcast and forlorn? NO! A thousand times, NO! In the midst of the pain and difficulties of life, we find the sufficiency of God's grace and the comfort of His love. Our lives are marked by optimism and satisfaction as we *now* rejoice in hope. Truly, our *hope* is in the Lord.

Jon D. Bekemeyer

Notes:

A BETTER HOPE*Scripture Reading: Hebrews 7:19*

In Hebrews 7:19, the writer is speaking of the contrast between the Law of Moses (which could never take away sins—Hebrews 10:14) and the Person of Christ (Who could justify anyone—Acts 13:39).

Throughout the Old Testament, Israel's hope was that their sins would be covered. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest confessed his and Israel's sins before the Lord. The picture is that Israel's sins were placed in open view before God upon the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies; but when the High Priest poured the blood of the sacrifice over the Mercy Seat, Israel's sins were covered. No longer could God see Israel's scarlet sins. He could only see the blood of the Sacrifice. Israel knew nothing of sins being taken away. This is why they did not understand when John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

It was not until the revelation of the Mystery had been given to Paul that man learned that Christ's dying on the Cross was God's way of salvation. It was by the death of Christ that God could take away man's sins, never to remember them again (Psalms 103:12).

Nowhere in the Four Gospels will you read of the substitutionary death of Christ being the means of salvation. The twelve Apostles knew nothing of Christ dying for their sins. They saw the crucifixion as a murder Israel had committed (Acts 2:23, 3:14-15, 7:52) and one that needed to be repented of (Acts 2:37-38). It is only Paul who writes of the better hope that man has in Christ. What the Law could not do, Christ was able to do. Instead of doing the works of the Law, all a person need do today is BELIEVE that Christ was God's substitute Sin Offering, that He died for our sins, and that by believing on Him, we can have forgiveness of our sins (Romans 4:5).

*Marvin Duncan**Notes:***FALSE TEACHERS TO BE AVOIDED***Scripture Reading: Romans 16:17-19*

There are many who, when they read Romans 16:17-19, think Paul is talking of separation from some cult or Eastern religion; but the Scriptures are clear that there are individuals in the pulpits of many of our local churches who are in the ministry only to serve "their own belly." It is these ministers who claim to be the ministers of Christ, but in reality are the ministers of Satan that Paul is here warning the saints at Rome to "avoid" (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

To "avoid" these false teachers who were causing divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which Paul was teaching, meant that the saint must separate himself from these groups who were not teaching the Mystery and who were not "rightly dividing" the Word of Truth, as Paul instructs the saints to do in II Timothy 2:15.

It is hard for many Christians to see some pastor of a denominational church as an "enemy" of Christ (Philippians 3:17-19), but if he is not preaching the Mystery (God's secret purpose for this age in which we live), he is teaching something that is not true for today. This produces confusion, divisions, and offenses contrary to the doctrine revealed to Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13).

Not only are the saints today to "mark them which cause divisions" and then separate themselves from these false teachers, but the saint is also to "mark them which walk so as ye have us [Paul] for an example," as we see in Philippians 3:17. Separation is not only to be negative—away from something—but it is also positive. We are to be separated unto those who are following Paul, those who are teaching the Mystery, found only in the epistles of the apostle Paul. For it was to him alone that Christ made known God's secret program for this dispensation of the Grace of God (Ephesians 3:2).

Marvin Duncan