

The God of All Grace

BY B. G. ECHOLS

With assurance the apostle seems to draw his letter to a close although he does not yet make a final ending. "And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself perfect, establish, strengthen you" (1 Peter 5:10). There is nothing more beautiful in the letter than this promise. It takes grace to enable man to follow the teaching of the apostles, and it is "the God of all grace" Who is our assurance. Do we truly believe God is such?

God is the source of every heavenly gift and quality, and He offers them to us even though we do not merit or deserve them. When we think of the characteristics of God: omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, holiness, etc.; we may forget that He is the God of all grace and this is among the greatest characteristics to us. It is God Who converts through the word of His grace, and He alone comforts us with His promises. God supplies every need for His people. To believe in such a God is to catch a glimpse of the unsearchable riches. It is to find the one sure secret of triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil (2 Cor. 12:9). Grace is another subject that occupies a high place in Peter's thinking as it should in ours (1 Pet. 4:10; 1:2, 10, 13; 3:7; 5:5).

The following words from J. M. E. Ross are noteworthy. "The God of all grace' - grace to begin and grace to endure; grace to do and grace to bear; grace to fight and grace to serve; grace to bear adversity without flinching and to bear prosperity without spoiling; grace to be gracious among the ungracious; grace to grow into the likeness of the Master."

All the activity Peter encourages is to be lived in the light of the promise of eternal glory in Christ. This is the promise to all who are called by God.

God's call by the gospel is prominent in apostolic writings (1 Pet. 1:15; 2:9; 2:21; 2 Thess. 2:14). After suffering we shall have glory just as Christ had (1 Pet. 1:21). Peter closely associates glory with Christ (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:11, 13; 5:1, 4). The God of all grace will not allow us to be overwhelmed in persecution and difficulty, but will allow them to accomplish His purpose. God uses suffering for good. By faith we submit ourselves increasingly to Jesus as Lord and He make us what He wants us to be. Peter seems to be contrasting a little while with eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17). The time of suffering may not seem little while it is being felt, but in comparison to eternity it is but a snap of the fingers (1 Pet. 1:6). When the goal is reached, who will count the steps?

There is something impressive in the three-fold message of encouragement of our ultimate success. Peter says God will "perfect, establish, strengthen" the disciples who resist the devil. This is difficult work, but God does it. We have our part as we seek, by faith, to do what God has outlined in His word. We must ever be humble (1 Pet. 5:5). All of these are in the future tense. The process is not yet complete. To perfect means to mend, restore, or complete thoroughly (1 Thess. 3:10). That is what God wants to do with our lives. Sin tears us up; God restores. The verb is found in another connection. It is translated by the word "mend" in the reference to the sons of Zebedee (Mk. 1:19). In Christ we are to be made complete. He can make us fit vessels for the tasks He has given us to accomplish. God acts to eliminate our deficiencies and bring us to a standard of usefulness in His service. He can take our poor, broken, and worn lives and mend all the tears and flaws (2 Thess. 3:3).

To establish means to make firm or to give vigor to resist attack. God wants us to be strong for Him and if we will submit patiently to His guidance, we will be such. The way of salvation is not the line of least resistance. People sometimes say, "I can't be a Christian." That is true when one tries to do it alone. But we are not alone. He is working with us to make us strong. Taken together, Peter promises us that God will establish us firmly in the faith, give us

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strength to stand firm, empower us for service, and give us strength to go on in face of everything. All of these are available to us by the grace of God in the application of His word (Rom. 16:25; Acts 20:32). The road to glory lies through tribulation, and in the fire of suffering grace often does its most perfect work. After speaking so much of persecution, trials, and difficulties, Peter closes with assurances that God's purpose will be fulfilled. In spite of Satan and sorrow, no permanent harm will come.

Because of what God has done, is doing, and shall do, "To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 5:11). We should recognize more clearly Who He is and Who we are, and then bow down and worship Him as Lord. We should be impressed with God's majestic power. We should look away from the troubles surrounding us to the source of our faith and strength. The same power that sustains the planets in their orbits is available to us. The devil has no real title to us unless we give it to him. We should give all rule and power over our lives to God. His dominion or might is such that He can surely do all He promises. True consolation in trouble comes from extolling the power of God. If He has the dominion and has called us to glory, what can we fear?

To have God work in our lives we must yield to Him. Our final victory over Satan will be by our faith in Jesus Christ, a victory which comes through steadfastness in faith. Brethren, are you serving God as you should?



Moments of Meditation...

Lessons From Geese



When you see geese flying along in a V formation, you might be interested in knowing what scientists have discovered about why they fly that way. As each bird flaps its wings, the wind currents it creates produce and uplift for the bird immediately following.

By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own. **Lesson 1: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on each other's thrust.**

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front. **Lesson 2: If we take a tip from the geese, we will stay in formation with those who are headed the same way we are going and stay with the task at hand.**

When the lead goose gets tired, he drops to the back and another goose flies the point position. **Lesson 3: It pays to take turns when doing hard jobs.**

Geese honking from behind seem to encourage those up front. **Lesson 4: We respond to encouragement from others.**

Finally, when a goose gets sick, or is wounded and falls out of formation, two geese fall out with him and follow him down to help and protect him. They stay with him until he is either able to fly or until he is dead. They then launch out on their own or with another formation to continue their journey. **Final lesson: If we follow the example of geese, we will stand by each other in the same way.**

- Anonymous

