

More Grace

We have all been recipients of God's grace, which has been defined as the unmerited, or undeserved, favor of God. It is the nature of God to forgive and show mercy. In spite of the sin of people, past and present, God is always looking for an intercessor. God showed the Prophet Amos a vision of locusts devouring the crops. Amos cried out to God, saying, "*O Lord God, please forgive! How can Jacob stand, For he is so small [that he cannot endure this]?"*" (Amos 7:2 AMP). God responded to Amos, and "*The Lord revoked this sentence. 'It shall not take place,' said the Lord*" (Amos 7:3 AMP). The encounter between God and Amos continued with a vision of a punishment of fire, which would consume the underground water system and the land. God revoked this sentence at Amos's request, but He also showed him a plumb line. The plumb line was a warning, promising impending judgment.

God has not changed. He still wants to extend mercy and grace to His people and to fallen humanity. We have heard the Apostle Paul's "thorn in his flesh" preached many different ways, but here is another thought: Paul made clear to us his struggles with his flesh in almost every epistle he penned. Romans 7:20 gives us insight into what may have been the "thorn" or "messenger" he battled with on a daily basis. Paul seems to lament, saying, "*But if I am doing the very thing I do not want to do, I am no longer the one doing it [that is, it is not me that acts], but the sin [nature] which lives in me.*" Paul described the joy he felt at the power of the Holy Ghost at work in his life, but also of an opposing law of evil warring in his mind.

Our minds, where our thoughts originate, are the seat of our carnal nature. This is a result of the fall of mankind. Our fallen nature is something we must fight against on a daily basis, unless after we witness to others, we find ourselves castaways. This is evident throughout scripture. Paul made it clear that it was the grace of God that rescued him from his sinful nature. We know that "*God cannot be tempted by [what is] evil, and He Himself tempts no one. But each one is tempted when he is dragged away, enticed and baited [to commit sin] by his own [worldly] desire (lust, passion)*" (James 1:13-14 AMP). It is our flesh (carnal, sin nature) that a messenger of Satan will attempt to work through.

Paul, who felt himself to be the least of apostles because of his persecution of the Church, stated that he struggled in his mind because of the persecution, trials, and imprisonment he suffered. Perhaps he also struggled because of the shame he had to overcome. Paul admitted, when he appeared before Festus, that he had to work at having a righteous mindset. And to be willing to extend the grace he was given to others. Acts 24:16 (KJV) says, "*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.*" Paul exhorted us in II Corinthians 2:10-11, to forgive, and to extend grace to others. Because in doing so, we put Satan at a disadvantage. We know that we cannot overcome sin without Jesus. Can we conclude that Paul's thorn was his sin nature, or carnal mind? Maybe, maybe not? However, a conclusion can be made, as we pray, standing in the gap for the land, that we should always rely on, and extend more grace.

Beth Marie Evans
Apostolic Author
Associate Minister
International Christian Fellowship
Brookfield, Illinois