

GRACE to Grow By in Recovery

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 1:8-9 NIV)

What is grace and what does it have to do with a person in recovery? The dictionary definition of the word grace includes terms such as: 1) Service freely rendered; good will. 2) The act of showing favour. 3) Clemency, mercy. 4) The love of God towards man. Each of these definitions indicates that grace is not earned, but is given without cost and without having been solicited by the intended receiver. The giver does not seek to benefit from giving the gift; it is solely given to benefit the receiver. Grace would not be grace if it was solicited or earned. The intended receiver's part is either to accept the gift being offered, or choose to reject it. The word "grace" correctly identifies the extravagant love our Heavenly Father has towards us. We cannot earn this love; we can only receive it!

While we wandered in our addictive behaviours and didn't even know God, He gave His son as the sacrifice for our sins in order that we might have freedom from the penalty of sin. The Bible tells us that Jesus humbled Himself and came in the likeness of men. He submitted Himself to death on the cross so that we, by His death and resurrection, might be saved from an eternity without God. ***This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.*** (1 John 4:10 MSG)

Even though, in our addiction, we have lived in willful disobedience against God, He is still there beside us when we choose to go through the recovery process with Him. No matter how shameful and evil our past behaviours, He welcomes us with outstretched arms and encourages us to a new life through faith in His Son. When we choose for recovery, we may not know much about God, or His son Jesus, but He knows all about us and cares for each of us. We make ourselves available to life in recovery when we don't "pick up" our substance of choice. However, true recovery is possible only when we choose to receive God's gift of grace. Through faith in Jesus, we are "born again" and all things have become new. We find ourselves in this place of grace, not by anything we have done for ourselves but by what Jesus did on our behalf. ***For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile. This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life."*** (Romans 1:16-17 NLT)

When we, through faith, believe and confess that Jesus died for our sins to reconcile us to a Holy God, we immediately change our citizenship from the Kingdom of Darkness to the Kingdom of Light and thereby receive all that God has for us. We are freed from the powers of darkness and obsessions that we have previously been subjected to, and they lose their authority over us. Through His Holy Spirit, God works in our lives to change us into the person He created us to be. As we start to live in the Kingdom of Light we have the protection of our gracious God and all the benefits of the inheritance that is ours through being citizens of His Kingdom. This truly is LIFE in recovery. ***For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.*** (Colossians 1:13-14 NLT)

God has adopted us as His children. He has promised that no matter what happens He will cause everything to work together for good. We know the Holy Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. The Holy Spirit prays for us and pleads for us in harmony with God's own will. We are loved with an everlasting love by a loving and gracious Father whose mercy is new every morning. Nothing in all creation is able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus. Through the Lord Jesus we are inheritors of all the promises of God. ***For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*** (2 Corinthians 1:20-22 NIV)

Amazing Grace is a well know hymn which was composed by John Newton a former slave trader. For Newton it was an expression of how God had pursued him with His love during a turbulent life and how he found grace and peace within himself when he surrendered his life to the Lord Jesus. Many of us identify with this hymn and it has become a favourite for people who understand where their lives were prior to surrendering to the grace and truth that is found in the Lord Jesus. In recovery, when we come to the conclusion that, we were lost but now are found, we arrive at the place where God will generously pour out his amazing grace as we seek Him in all our ways. ***Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*** (Romans 5:1-2 NIV)

Questions

1. Do I readily accept the grace of God?
2. What difference would it make in my life if I totally surrendered to God's grace?