



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: NOVEMBER 2021

by Lee Shipp

WHO WINS? DEFEATING SHAME!

Who wins? Everyone is trying to. Everyone wants to. But who really does? Who reigns in life? Do kings? Numerous kings have sat as sovereigns ruling over great kingdoms but were they really reigning? Did Cesar reign? Did King James reign? Did queen Mary reign? No. They were miserable! Did Jesus win? Did Jesus reign? Did Paul reign? Did he win? He said he did. He testified that he had run his race, he had finished his course, he fought a good fight and kept the faith.

And Jesus, well ... God raised Him from the dead. He triumphed over death. Oh, and He has a name that is above every name. And He sits as the power in heaven. Oh, and He has an everlasting kingdom. And He has joy and a joyful kingdom and a joyful people. And love, He has a kingdom of love.

So, can you win? Can you reign over life? The declaration of the gospel is an absolute – yes! God promises to bring everyone who believes in His Son into the victory of His Son. He guarantees them to be more than conquerors, "... thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 8). John revealed that the victory which overcomes the world is our faith; our belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

If my relationship with God is on the basis of faith, then nothing can separate me from the love of God other than an unbelieving heart. However, numbers of people are convinced their relationship with God is based upon their ability to measure up to God's demands. They somehow consider that if they are good enough then God will be disposed to show them kindness and perhaps answer their prayers. They conceive their sufferings are the results of their failures and an unhappy and unimpressed God is giving them what they have earned – the just wages of their disobedience.

The gospel of grace shatters this theology. In Romans 4, Paul shows that Abraham did not have a relationship with God on the basis of works. Instead, Abraham walked with God and was justified by God through his faith in God, *"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness"* (Romans 4:3).

Furthermore, if you relate to God on a system of debt then how do you know if you prayed enough? How do you know if you fasted enough? How do you know you sacrificed enough? And the answer is – you don't know. You only hope that you paid the expected price God was demanding. In time you will discover if you were good enough based upon whether God answered your prayers or not.

I have heard preachers manipulate the people through this bartered relationship with God, robbing the people of grace and the ability to reign in life. Preachers of the letter (2 Corinthians 3) will cry, "If you would have fasted just one more day the answer would have come." Or they may say, "The reason we do not have revival is because we have not sacrificed enough; we have not repented enough." This is wrong, it is not grace. Furthermore, you are never sure if you will get anything from God.

When we live by grace through faith the answer is always certain and

the answer is always, "Yes!" Do you ever see Abraham condemning himself because of his failure? Abraham sinned. Do you ever hear Abraham concluding that God was finished with him because he sinned and disobeyed God? No, you don't. Abraham did not live under the law. The Law would not be given for another four hundred years after Abraham was dead. Abraham lived in grace. He, by grace, reigned in life. Beloved, this is the liberty the gospel is calling us into.

If a man is determined to work for his relationship with God, then he cannot live by grace; this is his choice not God's. Likewise, the man who chooses to not work but rather believe on him that justifieth the ungodly, he shall be counted righteous by God (Romans 4:4-5). David referred to this man of faith as blessed and forgiven before God.

A RELATIONSHIP OF FAITH OR DEBT

God did not establish His promises to Abraham on the basis of the Law but through the righteousness of faith. The Law makes faith void. Likewise, faith makes the Law void. Furthermore, if the promise is made upon law and debt then the promise is void for all men have failed, sinned, and fallen short of God's demands (Romans 4:14-16). The only expectation a man living by the Law can expect is God's wrath. But when a man chooses to live by faith then the Law is made void, and where there is no law there is no transgression (Romans 4:15).

"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all ..." (Romans 4:16). Abraham's confidence was never in himself, or that he could fulfill God's demands, or that he could produce an heir by some working of his own power. Instead, he lived by faith, *"... being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform"* (Romans 4:21).

Just as Abraham had access to God through faith we do as well. You do not have to live hoping in yourself. You do not have to live wondering if you have been good enough for God to accept you. Instead, you can enter into God's righteousness by faith and there you can live and love

"IF, BY THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE I REIGN IN LIFE, THEN HOW CAN I NOT WANT MORE GRACE?"

God, *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God"* (Romans 5:1-2).

HOW DO WE REIGN?

Now, let us come back to the victory of this life. How do we reign? *"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:17). There it is ... the gift of victory. The victorious life is the one that is receiving an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.

Instead of receiving this grace just watch how multitudes continue to struggle to live by their works in an effort to prove their sincerity and worth to God. Sure, they are saved by grace but somehow they are trapped into thinking they must continue in works. The Bible reveals in Colossians that as you received Him so walk in him. How did you receive Him? According to Ephesians 2, it was by grace through faith. And that is how you walk and live and win – you live by grace through faith.

Paul explained to the Romans that the consequences of one man's disobedience resulted in the death of all people. These people didn't do anything to suffer the consequences of death and sin but be born. Adam's sin and judgment was imputed to all of his children. Unless heaven can rescue, humanity was doomed. So God, by His love and mercies, offered life and righteousness the same way. If one man's disobedience makes many sinners then one man's obedience will make

many righteous. This righteousness will be a gift imparted to those who will believe in His Son Jesus.

“For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:17-21).

Our victory rests upon two things: the gift of righteousness and receiving abundance of grace. Notice the victory is given as a gift to those who will receive. It is by faith.

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness is a gift from God, it cannot be earned. The law was never given to make us righteousness or help us to be righteous. The law was given to prove our guilt before God. The law was to lead us in desperation to salvation through the grace of the Lord.

As Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness; likewise, we are joined with him in righteousness if we also believe God. This righteousness is a gift whereby we stand with God and God with us, as though we had NEVER done one thing wrong!

Now here is the problem. Many believe this is the way of salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by grace through faith (Eph 2). But people do not live there. Instead, many live trying to earn God’s favor by dead works. Victory is not promised to someone believing just one of these truths. You cannot live in the victory by simply receiving the gift of righteousness, you must also receive the abundance of grace.

THOSE WHO RECEIVE AN ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

Victory is for those who receive an abundance of grace! Sadly, many will not. It is not because God has refused to offer them grace. Instead, they have spurned His goodness. Multitudes who gather in the Name of Jesus each week to worship the Lord are squandering His grace and living lives of defeat and tragedy.

If, by the abundance of grace I reign in life, then how can I not want more grace? What person in need of God would ever say, “Enough of the grace give me something else now!” If, by the grace of God I am what I am, then how can I not desire more grace? If, in my weakness His grace is sufficient, then how can I not cry for more grace? If grace is God’s direct influence and power exerted upon my heart and life, then how could I say God’s grace is not enough to keep me holy and live pleasing in His sight?

Grace is Christ in me as the hope of glory. Grace is God working in me both to will and do of His good pleasure. All the passages about the indwelling work of the Holy Ghost and His power in the believer is grace working!

EVERYTHING COMES BY THIS GRACE

Everything you need to be holy, to be faithful, to be victorious, to be used, to be happy is by abundant grace. It is not grace and other things. It is not grace and now speak on conviction. It is not grace and now speak on holiness. It is not grace and now speak on faithfulness and not sinning. It is not grace and now speak on discipline. It is not grace and now speak on separation from the world. It is not grace and now speak on repentance.

When you speak on grace you are speaking on holiness. When you speak on grace you are speaking on discipline. When you speak on grace you are speaking on faithfulness and not sinning. When you speak on grace you are speaking on repentance. When you speak on grace you are speaking on conviction.

For me personally, I can testify that it is by this abundance of God’s help that I have been able to prevail and reign in life! God’s grace has

become the means by which I live. I lean and rely upon God in a way I never had before.

BE A GRACE GIVER

Come on, you want your ministries to REIGN? Give your people an abundance of grace. Get rid of the lawyers. Get rid of the preachers of the letter. Many years ago the Lord purged out of our church a group of preachers who were “of the letter” (2 Corinthians 3). Our church was immediately lifted into victorious liberty. We have walked and increased in this victory throughout the years.

Anybody can reign in life if they would receive this abundance of grace. My heart breaks to watch so many continue in their shame and struggle. They know God can set them free, but they refuse to believe He can do it by grace. Instead, they stubbornly struggle to free themselves. I consider the life they could have, the love they could have, the freedom they could have – but they forfeit the gift in an effort to earn it.

Do you want to encourage men? Give them an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. If you want to take the life out of them, if you want to defeat them then tell them their salvation depends on their work; tell them they must perfect holiness in themselves.

The Lord told Paul that His grace was sufficient for him. Is it sufficient for you? When God chose the word sufficient, He was saying that my grace is able to lift you up; to take you up; to raise you up; to lift you, carry you, and free you.

“The other evening I was riding home after a heavy day’s work. I felt very wearied, and sore depressed, when swiftly, and suddenly as a lightning flash, that text came to me, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” I reached home and looked it up in the original, and at last it came to me in this way, “MY grace is sufficient for thee”; and I said, “I should think it is, Lord,” and burst out laughing. I never fully understood what the holy laughter of Abraham was until then. It seemed to make unbelief so absurd. It was as though some little fish, being very thirsty, was troubled about drinking the river dry, and Father Thames said, “Drink away, little fish, my stream is sufficient for thee.” Or, it seemed after the seven years of plenty, a mouse feared it might die of famine; and Joseph might say, “Cheer up, little mouse, my granaries are sufficient for thee.” Again, I imagined a man away up yonder, in a lofty mountain, saying to himself, “I breathe so many cubic feet of air every year. I fear I shall exhaust the oxygen in the atmosphere,” but the earth might say, “Breathe away, O man, and fill the lungs ever, my atmosphere is sufficient for thee.” Oh, brethren, be great believers! Little faith will bring your souls to Heaven, but great faith will bring Heaven to your souls.” – C.H. Spurgeon.

Grace is associated with the power of God. And here is the tragedy of our day. Paul told Timothy that in the last days men would have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof (2 Timothy 3). The power of godliness is grace. Multitudes are denying this grace to believers everywhere.

Paul did not tell Timothy there would be a shortage of religion, a shortage of prayer, a shortage of belief. He said they would deny the power. Beloved, I have watched them deny this power to their own destruction.

One of the greatest theologians in church history made this observation:

“A precious secret of the Christian life is to have Jesus dwelling within the heart and conquering things that we never could overcome. It is the only secret of power in your life and mine, beloved. Men cannot understand it, nor will the world believe it; but it is true, that God will come to dwell within us, and be the power, and the purity, and the victory, and the joy of our life. It is no longer now, “What is the best that I can do?” but the question is, “What is the best that Christ can do?” It enables us to say, with Paul, in that beautiful passage in Philippians, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound, everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthened me.” With this knowledge I go forth to meet my testings, and the secret stands me good. It keeps me pure and sweet, as I could never keep myself. Christ has met the adversary and defeated him for me. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ.” (AB SIMPSON - MAY 17).