



HG265: Amazing Grace (Verse 3)
Through Many Dangers, Toils And Snares

2 Corinthians 11:16-28

Home Group Study Notes

8 October 2023 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

We all get discouraged at times but are you a “glass half full” or a “glass half empty” person?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG265: Amazing Grace (Verse 3) ***Through Many Dangers, Toils And Snares***

2 Corinthians 11:16-28

Home Group Sermon Notes

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Introduction

We know John Newton to be a coarse, cruel slave trader who called out to God in the midst of a storm but he had also known hardships during his life. His mother died when he was aged 6 and he went to sea with his father when he was 11. At aged 18 he was press ganged into the Royal Navy. He tried to desert but was caught, stripped to the waist, tied to the mast and flogged in front of the whole crew. He was disgraced, humiliated, demoted and in despair, contemplated suicide. He later transferred to a slave ship bound for West Africa, the rest of the crew did not like him and like Joseph's brothers in Egypt they left him with a slave dealer where he was abused and treated like all the other slaves. After his conversion in 1748 he continued to ply his trade a further 6 years. In 1788 he apologised in a pamphlet he published, "*Thoughts upon the slave trade*" saying that his time in the slave trade "*will always be a subject of humiliating reflection to me that I was once an active instrument in a business at which my heart now shudders*" He lived with a deep sense of thankfulness and gratitude to the God who had saved him despite his failures and shortcomings.

The 3rd verse of John Newton's famous hymn Amazing Grace starts, "*Through many dangers toils and snares I have already been,*" and in 2 Corinthians 11.16-28 we see Paul list some of the trials that he had endured to date going to places no other apostle had ministered before when he was forced to defend himself against false teachers and produce his credentials as an apostle.

1. Trouble, Toils And Snares

5 times Paul received the Jewish punishment of flogging, a punishment so severe that it was liable to kill a man. He had endured the Roman punishment of being beaten with a rod of birch wood 3 times. At the time sea travel was extremely dangerous but Paul was willing to take the risk and he was shipwrecked 3 times suffering a day and night in the open sea. Road travel was just as dangerous as the roads were infested by bandits and robbers. He had been hungry, been cold and homeless. Paul was a marked man having enemies among Jews and Gentiles and some would have wanted to kill him, yet he survived and carried on, he never gave up.

Paul endured because of his love for Christ and the church. He was a brilliant and well educated man and could have escaped all these trials by walking away but he knew he had a call from God and a deep concern for the church. Taking the good news to the Gentiles proved costly yet he was willing to endure any torture, hardship and abuse because he was confident in the truth that Jesus Christ is Lord. In his weakness he was strong, God's grace was sufficient for him.

Paul knew that it was the grace of God that had carried him through the “*dangers toils and snares.*” He knew that God was in control and that he was with him throughout. If our trials are the product of fate or chance then we might as well give up. We cannot control chance or fate, but if God is in control and we trust him then we can overcome anything with his help. When we trust our own abilities and strategies, we fail. Paul says, “*For when I am weak, then I am strong.*” 12:10. God can work out his purposes in the trials of our lives if we yield to him and trust and obey him. Our faith increases and our prayer life is strengthened. Trials can bring us closer to other Christians and they glorify God.

2. Down But Not Out

Several times Paul had hit rock bottom, he says in Ch 1.8, “*We were crushed and completely overwhelmed and we thought that we would never live through it. In fact we expected to die. But as a result we learned to rely not on ourselves but on God who can raise the dead. And he did deliver us from mortal danger. And we are confident that he will continue to deliver us.*” We can be thankful for everything he suffered because it is those same dangers toils and snares that the Lord uses to encourage us and believers down the ages.

3. Paul's Sources of Encouragement

a. Praise Paul knew that praise was an important factor of achieving victory over discouragement and depression, praise changes things just as prayer changes things. Paul praised God who he knew as the “*God of all comfort,*” Ch1 v3. He understood that God allowed him to go through the trials and hardships and that because of them he would be a comfort and encouragement to others. And as the Lord comforted Paul, that same promise of comfort is given to us. The word comfort here doesn't mean we can expect God to come alongside us and sympathise with us and speak soothing words through our difficulties, it means that he will give us the strength to overcome and the power to cope to get through whatever it is we are going through- if we seek and trust him. The Greek word for comfort here means “*to come alongside and help.*” It is the same word used for the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, in John 14:16. We all get discouraged, we all suffer hardship, discouragement is no respecter of people. Charles Haddon Spurgeon the great English preacher said this, “*I am the subject of depression of spirit so fearful that I hope none of you ever get to such extremes of wretchedness as I go to.*”

b. The Presence of God During trials Paul was encouraged by the Presence of God's Spirit within himself and who is within all believers. “*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 Cor 1:21-22. Paul could live life to the fullest regardless of the difficulties because he knew that the best was yet to come, this life is not all there is. He was encouraged knowing that all who die in Christ will be resurrected to live with Christ forever. “*We know that the one who raised Jesus Christ to life from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence,*” 4:14. Whatever hardship or trial he had to endure was nothing compared to spending eternity with the Father. One day we will stand in the presence of the Risen Lord and live in the place where all hardships, toils and snares will be a thing of the past and removed from our memories. Paul walked by faith not by sight, he looked at the eternal, “*to what we have not yet seen,*” 2 Cor 4 18, heaven was not simply a destination for Paul it was his motivation and his life was governed by eternal values.

c. The Faithfulness of God Paul knew that God was faithful. If we look on our service to God as a burden instead of a privilege it will be a drudge and we will do only what is required but Paul was overwhelmed by the fact that God had chosen him to take the gospel to the Gentiles. How could he lose heart when he was involved in such a wonderful ministry, one that he knew that he received from God. Would God have called him and then see him fail? Of course not, God called and God would enable and God would see him through. We all suffer times of discouragement, but if we are secure in our call and our desire to do our very best for Him then we can endure and overcome any trial. If we are looking for affirmation and encouragement from others we may well wait a long time and these things have no longevity. We need to do what we do for the Lord as if no one is watching or listening, as if we have an audience of One. The important thing is that we are where God wants us to be, doing what he wants us to do so that he might be glorified. When we are seeking to glorify and please God then we don't need to fear what others say and think about us.

d. Past Encounters With God Paul drew on his past encounters with the Lord. He had 3 separate visions that we will be familiar with, on the road to Damascus, Ananias coming to minister to him and one when he had a vision from God calling to minister to the Gentiles. (Acts 9. Acts 16). In chapter 12 he also tells us of an experience that he kept secret for 14 years. He tells a story about a wonderful experience when God took him up to heaven and then sent him back to earth again. Paul is scarce on details so we can only imagine what he saw and heard but he affirms the reality of heaven and God's ability to take people there. There is no doubt that this vision along with the others was one of the sustaining powers in Paul's life, a vision he had kept to himself for 14 years yet now felt forced to share against his will. We may not have seen God's glory but Paul did and this can be a great comfort and reassurance to us .

4. God's Grace Is Enough

Paul knew the reality of the all sufficient and Amazing Grace of God. Grace that enabled him to overcome his physical weariness and carry on through tiredness. Grace that enabled him to endure the physical pain of beatings, floggings and the thorn in his side, (12:7). Grace that enabled him to endure opposition. Paul was continually opposed but he never gave up, he was slandered and challenged and misinterpreted, yet God's grace made him not care about what people said or thought about him. That same grace is available to us today. J Hudson Taylor the missionary who opened China to the gospel said *"All Gods giants have been weak men who did great things because they reckoned on his being with them."*

There's an old gospel song that goes:

*Trouble in my way I have to cry sometime.
Trouble in my way I have to cry sometime.
I lay awake at night but that's alright.
Jesus will fix it after while*

*Stepped, stepped in the furnace a long time ago.
Shadrech, Meshach and Abednigo.
No, they were not worried, oh this I know.
They knew that Jesus will fix it after while.*

*Trouble in my way I have to cry sometime.
Trouble in my way I have to cry sometime.
I lay awake at night but that's alright.
Jesus will fix it after while.*

*Jesus, He will fix it.
Gonna be alright.
Its gonna be alright in the morning.
He's gonna make a way.*

Trouble... toils... and snares, things that cause us anxiety, worry, fear and harm, no one suggests going through such times is easy. At times Paul was “crushed” and “overwhelmed,” he thought he would die, yet he clung to the “God of all Comforts” who supplied him with the grace to overcome. He was never slow to ask the Lord for help or to ask other Christians to pray for him. God has ample grace for all our needs but he does not give it in advance. When you find yourself discouraged and ready to give up take the attention off yourself and your troubles and focus on God. Go before Him and ask for help. Paul knew that he could trust God and we can too, he lived looking beyond this life and into the next knowing that there was more, and that ultimately all would be well, Jesus would make it alright in the morning .

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Emmanuel Church Text 2023



*The LORD bless you and keep you: the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you: the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26*

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: Does it worry you to think that God might allow those he loves to suffer? What are some positive and negative responses that we can have to suffering?

2: How does personal suffering enable people to comfort others?

3: Why did Paul boast about his sufferings? Why wasn't such boasting evidence of a lack of humility?

4: How important to you is it that people appreciate you?

5: Do you always serve God believing it to be a privilege rather than a burden even when its costly?

6: How would focusing on what is eternal affect your daily experience?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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