

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 17



DAY
1

HOW GREAT A SALVATION

Psalms 13:5; 18:2; 27:1; 28:8; 35:9; 51:12; 62:1-2, 6-7; 69:13

In this week of devotional reflections, you will look up and read many scriptures. You will discover how extensive and expansive the Words of Life throughout the Bible are. The summer series on Genesis followed the theological framework of Creation-Fall-Redemption; however, only the final week of the summer focused on redemption. The fall series, Words of Life, looks at how wide and deep our redemption is.

To be saved is to be delivered, rescued, and redeemed from enemies that are greater than you and from difficulties that are too much for you. Salvation rescues you from sin, Satan, death, and hell. Many decades ago, I read a book called *How Great a Salvation*. That theme has remained with me ever since. Your salvation is far greater than you imagine. The Apostle Paul says God is able to do immeasurably more than we can imagine (Ephesians 3:20-21). This fall we will seek to improve our imagination and understanding of our GREAT salvation and our great SAVIOR, Jesus Christ.

Every week there will be a cluster of Words of Life. These words are closely related and are often used to define and describe each other. This week's Words of Life are about the nature of our God. Love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, generosity, patience, long-suffering, kindness--they all flow and merge together in our God and our salvation.

You started today's devotional by reading a selection of verses from the Psalms that talk about our salvation. Look up each of the following verses and discover what they teach about salvation:

Isaiah 25:9, 33:2; Luke 2:29-32; Acts 4:12; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:13; Titus 2:11-14.

What are you to do with such a great salvation? Paul says, *continue to work out your salvation ... for God is working inside you* (Philippians 2:12-13). Be grateful, be humble, rejoice, and be strong in the work of God inside you.

DAY
2

THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD

Psalms 17:7, 63:3, 69:16, 103:4; Jeremiah 31:3

The single most prominent characteristic of God in the Bible is simply God is LOVE. The God of the Old and New Testament is a God of love. Sometimes Christians make the mistake of thinking God in the Old Testament is angry and Jesus in the New Testament is loving. They think the Old Testament is a religion of works and judgment and the New Testament is a religion of grace and love. That is a serious misreading of the Bible.

The Love of God is rooted in the covenant of God made over and over with his people, even though, over and over, his people were sinful and rebellious. The wonderful teaching of the Old Testament is that God continued to love and forgive his wayward people (read Numbers 14:17-20). The Hebrew word is HESED. It is a challenging word to translate, for it is more than simple love. It is loyal love, steadfast love, strong love. The English Bible translation known as the Coverdale Bible used the compound word *lovingkindness*. That word does not appear in most modern translations, but the meaning is always there.

God so loved the world with a strong, loyal, steadfast, persistent, pursuing love, that he gave us Jesus (John 3:16). That is how God loves YOU. That is how God will ALWAYS love you. Lamentations 3:22-23 says the steadfast love of the Lord, or the great love of the

Lord, or the faithful love of the Lord, NEVER ceases. You are loved with a love far greater than you can know.

The love of God for you creates an unbreakable bond. You are secure in the love of God. You are forgiven and you are free in the love of the Lord. The love of God removes all guilt, shame, condemnation, fear, and anxiety. God's love is greater.

And the love of God transforms you and creates in you the same kind of loyal, strong love. Therefore, you love the Lord with all your heart. You love others with a strong love. You live a life of love because you are above all and always loved by Jesus.

DAY
3

AMAZING GRACE

Ephesians 2:1-10; Luke 15:11-32 (the Prodigal Son)

Amazing Grace may be the most well-known hymn ever written. The story of the Prodigal Son is the most well-known parable of Jesus (followed by the parable of the Good Samaritan). God's grace is amazing. God's grace is also:

- A surpassing grace (2 Corinthians 9:14)
- A sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- A glorious grace (Ephesians 1:6)
- An abundant grace (1 Timothy 1:14)

Jesus Christ our Savior came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). Out of the fullness of Jesus, we have received grace upon grace, or grace and more grace (John 1:16). One of the most beautiful benedictions in the Bible is: *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all* (2 Corinthians 13:14). Jesus is the grace of God.

Grace is the undeserved, unmerited, unearned love of God. Of course, the nature of God's love is all that, but the word *grace* emphasizes the generous and magnanimous quality of God's love for you. You didn't earn God's love by being awesome. You won't lose God's love by being terrible. God's love for you is consistent and persistent. That is the meaning of grace.

God's grace saves you (past tense), God's grace is saving you (present tense), and God's grace will save you fully (future tense). Grace is not just how you begin the Christian life, but how you live it day after day, and how you will end your life. You are surrounded by and enveloped in the grace of Jesus. That's why it is amazing, surpassing, sufficient, glorious, and abundant.

Here are a few more passages to read about grace. What do you learn in each one? Romans 3:23-25; Hebrews 4:16; 2 Peter 3:18; and Revelation 22:21. It is striking that the final words in the Bible are: *The GRACE of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. AMEN!*

DAY
4

THE MERCIES OF THE LORD

Nehemiah 9:30-32; Psalm 30:10, 31:9; 1 Timothy 1:2

The words of the hymn say:

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

God is holy, God is almighty. God is holy. And then the composer says, God is merciful and mighty. These words were inspired by Nehemiah 9:30-32 in particular, but also by the entire chapter. If you have time, read all of Nehemiah 9.

Nehemiah 9 is a prayer of confession by the people of God. It is a recitation of all that God has done for them, and yet, all the disobedience of God's people in light of God's marvelous actions on their behalf. Over and over, Nehemiah describes God's gracious, loving, merciful response to the people's sin, especially in verses 17, 19, 20, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, and 33.

All the words of this week's devotional pile up and repeat in this confession. God is long-suffering, steadfast in his love, loyal, generous, patient, forgiving, gracious, merciful, and more. God is all of this--over and over and over and over. God never stops

bringing his great salvation into our lives.

The mercies of God are fresh and new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23; some translations say *compassions*). While mercy is similar to love and grace, it has one additional aspect. Mercy is forgiveness that is shown to an offender by one who has the power to punish the offense. The offender is NOT punished, but is forgiven, reprieved, and allowed to escape the consequences of the offense.

We could sing of Amazing Mercy, because the way God was able to be merciful was by the sacrifice of his own Son, Jesus. Read 1 John 4:7-11 to see the merciful love of God in giving Jesus as an atoning sacrifice. Therefore, Paul gives the greeting: *Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and Jesus the Son* (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2).

Today, live in the grace, mercy, and peace of God.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION

You can always pick any idea from the sermon or the daily readings and biblical passages and talk about those ideas. A good format is to have each LifeGroup member share one idea that was most powerful for them.

Day One: What did you learn about salvation as you read through the variety of verses?

What does it mean to “work out your salvation” and how are you doing that on a regular basis?

Day Two: Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. This describes the nature of the love you are to have for others, because it is the nature of God’s love for you.

How often do you experience God’s love for you? How secure are you in God’s love? How is God’s love transforming you and making you a loving person?

Day Three: The primary theme of Living Word is GRACE. You have heard it so many times. Why do we need to keep hearing about grace? Why do YOU need to keep hearing about grace?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:10. It describes how grace ACTIVATED all Paul’s work. Grace is opposed to EARNING, but it is never opposed to EFFORT. Talk about this verse and how grace motivates and empowers your Christian life.

Day Four: As a group, talk about Nehemiah 9 and the mercies of the Lord that were given over and over to a disobedient people. In what ways does this encourage your own walk with Jesus?

You have received mercy. Now, be merciful to others. Read Luke 6:36 and Matthew 5:7. Are you a merciful person? Who needs your mercy and the mercy of forgiveness?

Finally: How did God speak to you this week? What did you hear? What is the up-to-date work of salvation going on RIGHT NOW in your life?