



APPNOTES

Date: November 18-22,2019

Series: Grace Is Greater

Psalm 40:1-3 As a college student, I hit rock bottom. There wasn't a specific incident that dropped me so low. It was a gradual fall – the kind you don't even notice happening. Even though I grew up in a Christian home and had plenty of knowledge, I failed to grasp the true essence of Christianity. Eighteen inches (head to heart) separated me from salvation. When I finally realized that gap, I felt my sins were just too much for God to forgive. I often turned to Psalms for comfort and strength. In this Psalm, David is speaking about a time when he felt trapped. But the Lord lifted him out of the mire and placed a new song in his heart. We all experience despair and shame. But no matter what our past, when we call out to God, He will find us and lift us out of the hollows. He did the same for me. He can do the same for you.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul was no stranger to sin. He spent his early life as a Pharisee determined to eradicate those who followed Jesus. His project of persecution was spectacularly interrupted while on a trip to Damascus where he intended to capture and punish followers of Jesus. God broke in and Paul became one of the greatest soldiers of Christ. In this verse, he reminds us that once we accept Christ as our savior, our old life is gone. We abandon our old ways and embrace our new life. Despite Paul's nefarious beginnings, God desired to use him to spread the Gospel throughout the region. In fact, the Bible is the story of God choosing the most unlikely people to do his greatest work. God delights in doing his best work through people with a past. So then, why not me? Why not you?

Jeremiah 29:11 Jeremiah 29:11, "the verse of hope," brings comfort because it helps us understand that no matter how bad our present situation is, God has a plan to lift us out of our captivity. He reveals His perfect will through our hardships and reminds us that when our past becomes ever-present, we miss our future. We all experience obstacles and go through life's trials. When we find ourselves in these situations we must not give up. We must do our part and continue living a fruitful life; God has a plan for us even though it might not be on our timing. God wants us to live an abundant life here on earth, but the true plans He has for us will be realized when we meet Him in Heaven. Until then, we must not sit around and do nothing. We must seek Him with all of our hearts. We must act!

Philippians 3:13-14 Vince Lombardi once said, "It does not matter how many times you get knocked down, but how many times you get up". No doubt he was referring to

getting tackled on the football field, but the wisdom applies to all aspects of life. In this verse, Paul reminds us we need to let go of our shame and embrace the future God has for us. Like an athlete, Paul was laser-focused on the goal. He concentrated on the future and who God was calling him to be, not on his past persecution of Christians. Even after we are forgiven by grace, we sometimes believe that our past disqualifies us from running on God's field and being a difference-maker in His kingdom. But God's grace is greater than our past. Let's not be derailed by yesterday's failures. We must look forward resolutely toward the end game to see the face of Jesus Christ!

Lamentations 3:22-24 The Book of Lamentations is a collection of poetic laments over the destruction of Jerusalem. The writer, Jeremiah, has just witnessed his city fall to an invading army. He watched as its gates burned and his family and friends were killed. His entire world was falling apart and yet he wrote these words of hope through bitter tears. This verse reminds us that even though we tend to get focused on our yesterdays, nothing in our past can outweigh God's grace in our present and future. We believe that there are limits to God's grace because we all have limits to our grace. But God has new mercy for us every day. To meet with God's mercy, we can follow Jeremiah's example of steadfast hope. Regardless of our situation, we can declare that what was intended for evil, God can - and will - use for good!

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