

“ADJ - Grace of God Part 4” (4-3-22)

Introduction: Grace - God’s Empowering Presence!

Acts 3 - Man lame from birth is healed at the temple gates, then Peter boldly preaches repentance!

Acts 4:1-4 (ESV)

(1) And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, (2) greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. (3) And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. (4) But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

Note: There will always be opposition to God’s Grace - but where Grace is, there is power!

Today: God’s Empowering presence - 3 key ways . . .

1) God’s empowering presence - a new identity & destiny

Acts 4:7 (ESV)

And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”

Note: The rulers ask: Who gave you the right to say & do these things . . .

Acts 4:8a (ESV)

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them . . .

Note: Take note of the “key” to what comes next - Peter is filled with the presence of God!

Acts 4:8-12 (ESV)

(8) . . . “Rulers of the people and elders, (9) if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, (10) let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead —by him this man is standing before you well. (11) This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. (12) And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Note: Grace rescued this man from his crippling past - Jesus is the source of gracious salvation!

- Don’t limit grace to just dealing with our past: I was rescued from my past! Accepted me as I was!
- But notice what their enemies recognized . . .

Acts 4:13 (ESV)

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Note: Consider the men operating in Grace - their past was known, but they were clearly different! The only factor that had changed - they had been with Jesus!

Application: Grace doesn’t just free us from our past, it gives us a whole new future & identity rooted in the presence of Jesus! Grace launches us into the future God has for us!

2) God's empowering presence - strength in any circumstance

The disciples are now threatened, told to stop preaching Jesus, and then released . . .

Acts 4:23-24a (ESV)

(23) When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. (24) And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God . . .

Note: In light of the threats & difficulties they faced - they looked to the Lord.

Grace empowers me to look at the obstacles I face honestly & then bring them to the Lord . . .

After reflecting on God's power thru history & man's resistance to him & his people, they invite God into their present circumstances . . .

Acts 4:29-30 (ESV)

(29) "And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Note: Did they plead for their circumstances to change? No! Instead they asked for . . .

- Boldness for themselves in the midst of these circumstances
- For God's Power to continue to touch lives in the name of Jesus!

Acts 4:31 (ESV)

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Note: Once again God's Power is associated with his presence - boldness in difficulty

Consider: How much time do I spend praying for my circumstances to change, even going so far as to think bad circumstances are due to the absence of God's Presence. (Have you ever asked - where are you God?)

Maybe we'd see more of God's presence & power if we prayed for ourselves to receive boldness instead of begging for things to change around us.

Application: Grace isn't a lack of problems, persecutions, or attacks, in fact I would argue those are pretty much guaranteed. Instead, Grace is the presence of God to grant us boldness & power to operate in any circumstance!

3) God's empowering presence - an outpouring of gifts

Acts 4:32-33 (ESV)

(32) Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. (33) And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Note: Grace - healing, preaching, & care for the body! Grace pours out gifts & the church grows & thrives!

This is not just the atmosphere in Acts & the early church, it was intended for us all (see Peter & Paul) . . .

Peter (in 1st Peter chapter 4) lays out how we steward God's grace in our lives & within our community . . .

1 Peter 4:10-11 (ESV)

(10) As each has received a **gift**, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied **grace**: (11) whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Note: The gifts of the Spirit aren't some special add-on to our life of Grace, that we can just take or leave. Grace & the spiritual Gifts go hand-in-hand . . .

- **“Charismatic”** - comes from the Greek word **“Charisma”** which we translate “gifts”
- The root word of Charisma? is **“Charis”** which we translate as “grace”

Paul emphasizes this as well in Romans (and other places) . . .

Romans 12:6-8 (ESV)

(6) Having **gifts** that differ according to the **grace** given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; (7) if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; (8) the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Note: There is power available in God's gracious presence to gift us for the sake of building up the church & reaching a world in need of Grace.

Conclusion: Grace is God's Empowering Presence - for a new identity, power in difficulty, & gifts for building people up!