**Mike Hipes – Facebook Lesson, September 17, 2020**

Good afternoon!

The sermon I was preaching was on God’s Grace! At one point during the lesson, I pulled out a $50 bill from my pocket and held it up for the whole congregation to see. Suddenly I had everybody’s full attention. There was a visitor sitting in the front row who had come to visit his family that Sunday. I had briefly met him prior to the start of worship services that morning. I called his name and offered him the $50-dollar bill. At first, he looked left and right to his family members as if to say, is this guy on the level? Why me? Then I walked up to him and he put out his hand. I said this is a gift from me to you, not because you earned it or deserve it. This is what God’s Grace is like! Undeserved favor! As a preacher, I couldn’t help capitalizing on the opportunity to add, “It pays to sit up front!” After services were over and we were all outside visiting, the young man walked up to me and wanted to give me back the money thinking that it was all a stunt of some sort for the lesson. I said no, the gift is real and yours to keep, just be grateful for it; pay it forward! Next Sunday the front rows were packed! LOL

God’s saving grace is not something that we deserve or can be earned, but we can certainly show our gratitude for it! We can do so in the way we serve and live for our Lord and Master Jesus who gave us this gift! Listen to how the apostle Paul puts it in Ephesians 2:4-10

· “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

When you think of God’s Grace what comes to mind? We use grace to describe many things. A well-coordinated dancer or athlete. Good manners or being considerate of others. Well-chosen words at a critical moment. A girl’s name! But God’s grace is so much more! It is much more than what saves us. It is what sustains us all through our Christian walk in life! In 2 Corinthians 12: 9 God told the apostle Paul when he was asking for help with a weakness, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3:18, “grow in the grace.” James says in James 4:6, “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, “God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” In Luke 2:40 when referring to Jesus as a child who was growing up says, “The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.” All of these forms of grace come after or in addition to that initial saving grace! The only way to possibly respond is to be grateful, and respond by serving Him daily as a result!

Folks listen, imagine if Terry Bradshaw (former quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers) who we’ve seen in the Publishers Clearing House TV commercials, actually showed up at your house. In the TV advertisement, he says that you can win a $1000 a day for life. Now picture him presenting you with a gift like that along with an autographed football and a selfie with him. When it is all over you may say, hey is this gift on the level? He would probably say, yes, it is yours to keep, just be grateful for it! I will bet that you would be telling everyone you meet how wonderful the PCH and Terry are, not because you had to as a prerequisite to receiving the gift but as a grateful result of what you already received! You didn’t earn it or even necessarily deserve it but you got something that may have saved you from your present situation and also helped you through the rest of your life! Spiritually speaking, God’s grace is like that. Every deed, work we do, bible study we teach, sermon we preach, service we render, praise we give, and so much more is not done in order to obtain and maintain the gift of God’s grace! All of our praise and service from salvation to glory is from our gratitude for the gift that was given to us! Lets’ pay it forward!

In His service,

Mike