

The Greatest Reward:

Go for It!

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS
P.O. BOX 18715
BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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Greater Grace World Outreach, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

Time is growing short. We are living in the last days. Only in this life can we exercise faith and build up rewards and privileges to enjoy throughout eternity. Therefore, we should take every opportunity to manifest the nature and character of God.

Some people claim that heavenly rewards are of no concern to them. They say that they will be happy just to be in the presence of the Lord. It is true that being in heaven will be wonderful, but knowing that there are greater rewards should stir up every Christian. God created us with an expectation. He enables us to “will and to do of His good pleasure.” I look forward to that day when Christ Himself will say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

My prayer is that this booklet will motivate each of us to live a life “well done” through the power of His grace and mercy. May these pages say to each heart, “Go for the prize of His high

calling and experience heaven for all it is worth.”

Chapter One

PLEROMA FAITH—FULLNESS
THAT FULFILLS

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephesians 4:11-16).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (John 13:20).

“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16).

Through careful study, we know that there were two thousand years from Creation to the Flood, and two thousand years between the Flood and the Cross. Now, nearly two thousand years have passed since the Cross.

Because the hour is so late, the world needs to see Christians who understand the fullness of Him that fills all in all (Ephesians 1:23)—*pleroma* believers who are broken and know that not a single thing can separate them from the love of God. By these believers, the Body of Christ increases itself through evangelism and is edified in love.

Pleroma is a Greek word that speaks of the fullness that Christ can give. *Pleroma* faith fills up every empty place—filling all the deficiencies in a man. In this kind of faith, the scars and wounds of the past are taken away, bringing in a brand-new abundant-life relationship with the Word of God through the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

As Christians alive at this hour, we have received a mandate to grow into that fullness. We are to decrease in ourselves and increase in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:30).

“For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

“And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:17-19).

Here, Peter is referring back to Matthew 17:2-6 and the Mount of Transfiguration, where

He saw Jesus in raiment “white as the light,” talking with Moses and Elias. For Peter, that picture was an empirical reality. He *did* see Jesus in that form, and he heard the Father speak. But, as he was writing his second epistle, Peter was no longer dependent upon empirical realities; he now depended on metabolized truth from the Word of God. He learned how to be a winner through *pleroma* faith.

Winners' Recognition

When Jesus Christ returns to earth in the Second Advent, the elect angels will be right behind Him, riding on horses, as heaven's armies descend to Armageddon. There, Jesus Christ will win the final battle simply by speaking the Word. The angels were first to come and see Him at His birth and resurrection, so they will be first, entering before the believers, at the Second Advent.

Next, after the angels, will be the victorious “winner” believers—those who laid up eternal rewards through a life of faith obedience on earth. After these will be the believers who did not receive any rewards (1 Corinthians 3:12-15). They lost rewards because of the eternal opportunities they missed while on earth—opportunities

to choose for Christ and to reveal Him by faith.

All born-again believers will return for the Millennial Reign, a thousand-year honeymoon on earth. But only the winners will have authority to rule with Christ over nations during this time, while the others will just be there to observe. Though they will all have glorified bodies, those who receive no rewards will have no authority.

Winner-believer or a believer who has lost all rewards—how would you prefer to be recognized forever and ever? Winners understand Ephesians 4 and what it means to have *pleroma* faith. They understand the local assembly principle (Ephesians 4:16). Many people are saved, but they won't be declared winners at the Bema Seat of Christ. On earth, *pleroma* believers reveal the nature of God which fills up all things in the universe.

God does not want us to rely on empiricism. Many scientists operate in empiricism through observable facts. But they are not credible in God's eyes if they do not recognize and acknowledge the reality of divine laws. No scientist has ever enforced one scientific law in the universe. The Word of God's power holds all things together (Hebrews 1:3). All things were created by Him and for Him, and by Him "all things con-

sist” (see Colossians 1:16-17). Scientific laws are based upon the veracity, omnipotence, and immutability of God. The Word of God is the treatise on how the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ holds all things together.

After the Millennial Reign, God will remove all of His physical laws. For now, the force of gravity is a part of this planet, maintaining physical order. But in the new creation, it will not be necessary. The law of gravity is something that scientists *discovered*, but scientific laws are always based on divine laws established by Christ through His Word.

Chapter Two

LIVING BY THE SURE WORD

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19).

Peter is saying, “I saw and heard in person, by a revelation of God, the glory of His transfiguration. I saw Jesus Christ as He will appear in the Second Advent. But more than that, I received a more sure Word, which is now circulating in my soul.” In this case, empirical reality became internal reality, and it led Peter to a fullness of faith that kept him during tremendous trials.

Think of the story of Lazarus and the rich man. As he looked to Abraham from hell, the rich man asked that Lazarus be sent to his five brethren so that they would believe. Abraham could only tell him that his brothers wouldn’t believe through empirical observation for very long. Only by constantly hearing the Word of God from Moses and the prophets would they

believe, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God—not by seeing miracles or experimental observation and emotional experiences.

Doctrine in Control

In 2 Peter 1:19, we have an interesting Greek phrase: "...until the day star *arise* in your hearts." The key word "arise" is *anatello*. The phrase refers to doctrine arising in your heart to the extent that it totally controls your essence by the Spirit and the Word.

Numbers 24:17 told of a Star that would arise out of Jacob and a Scepter out of Israel. Daniel 12:3 declares that those who lead many to righteousness shall shine as the stars. In Matthew 2:2, the star in the east led the wise men who found Jesus—the bright and Morning Star.

God wants the "day star" of doctrine to arise in our hearts. He desires that doctrine would come through our human spirit and go down into our heart through the mind, emotions, conscience, self-consciousness, and volition. It will completely take over the streams and rivers of life that flow from God, through us, to others, and back. Doctrine permeates and perpetuates

the life of God's nature within us when we are filled with His fullness. Every deficiency is filled up. The *past* with its problems is gone forever. The *present* is filled with the promise and provision of His power. The *future* is sure, as we know we are being conformed to Christ's image in His perfect plan.

"Knowing this first..." is a precious passage of Scripture in 2 Peter 1:20. The text speaks of an action that will be repeated, and Peter is telling his readers, "Above everything you read, know *this* first: No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation." Winners—those who have doctrine arising in their hearts—understand this. They have a pastor-teacher who studies isagogics and the original languages. He brings forth the Word and helps members of his church avoid undoctrinal movements of the day.

For this reason, a believer should be faithful to the assembly where he was called and support it. Just as a husband is to have one wife, every Christian should have one church and one pastor-teacher (Ecclesiastes 12:11).

Chapter Three

OVERCOMERS RULE

“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my *works* unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star” (Revelation 2:26-28).

The “works” referred to in that passage speak of a faith walk (John 6:28). Power over nations will be given to those who “overcome,” or win. It won’t be one nation that these men and women will reign over, but they may rule over a number of nations. Women will have equal opportunity to reign because in that day we will all be as angels, neither male nor female (Matthew 22:30).

Why would God concentrate so much power in the hands of these believers? Because He loves winners. “As soon as they hear of me,

they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me" (Psalm 18:44). "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to them that are in Rome also" (Romans 1:15).

God loves obedient people; they are His treasures on earth. He watches how overcomers innately love and believe the Word of God with their mental attitudes, emotional stability, and positive volition.

Winners will receive the honor of the Morning Star Order (Daniel 12:3). Even though they are far from perfect, winners obey God. They honor the local assembly and "come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a [mature] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Recognizing the Head

Winner believers speak the truth in love and grow up into the head of all things, even Christ. They are effectual working parts of the whole Body of Christ, and they are always available to the assembly. It is God's *pleroma* at work. Just as Jesus Christ was God's *pleroma*, now it is the *pleroma* believers in local assemblies who are filled with God's Word. The Word goes into the

human spirit (channel B) from the perceptive staging area of the mind (channel A) where all information is received as academic knowledge. Then, by faith and meekness it is filtered through the Holy Spirit and the Cross and transferred to the human soul (channel C).* The mentality is now filled with God's thoughts. The conscience operates by norms and standards of grace. Self-consciousness focuses on Jesus Christ (Hebrews 12:2). The emotions respond magnificently to the things of God, with joy as their strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Volition is positive toward God and His Word, and all the fullness of God comes in and keeps filling believers.

A winner keeps obeying the Word of God, using rebound when he fails. He reveals the nature of God and plans to be in the assembly because he is a *pleroma* Christian.

There are people who make careless statements such as, "I don't care if I get any rewards. I'll just be glad to get to heaven." That is not the attitude of an overcoming winner, but of someone who has no vision. Paul said, "I press toward the mark for the prize" (Philippians 3:14). He wanted the prize of the high calling.

God has placed in us a desire to win the prize. It is part of our expectations, part of our

being, part of living on earth. Thank God that when Christ returns, the winners will be with Him, right behind the elect angels. We have one life and it will soon pass, and only what was done with and in Christ will last (Matthew 7:21-23). The year is 1999—it is later than we think. “Now it is high time to wake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11). So, let’s redeem the time for the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16).

The Importance of the Pastor-Teacher

“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17)

Paul makes a very serious point in 2 Corinthians 11:2. After the Rapture, in divine order, in divine etiquette of the magnification of the table of organization, pastor-teachers will introduce their church members to Christ. The pastors will present each one by name. That is why a per-

sonal relationship with one's pastor is crucial (Hebrews 13:17). Is it any wonder that godly pastors are so zealous for the work of God?

Paul told the Corinthians, "I am jealous over you; I am competing with the devil and the demons of hell for your wandering minds." He was jealous with a godly jealousy because he wanted to present them to Christ as "chaste virgins." This doesn't mean that he expected them to be perfect. But he did want them to practice rebound when they failed, to draw close to Christ, and to be purified through faith in Christ.

Don't Be a Loser—Come!

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

"For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him

that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:14-17).

When the Spirit and the bride say, "Come," in this passage, it is an invitation to come and be a member of the Morning Star Order of winner believers. Receive the Word of God. Talk it over, reiterate it, magnify it, keep studying it, and never stop studying it.

In Revelation 2 and 3, seven times, to seven churches, it is written "to him that overcometh"—to him who is a winner—God will give a special reward, such as the Tree of Life. All Christians will be invited to attend God's celebrations in heaven; however, only a limited few will be allowed to eat from the Tree of Life, which gives eternal knowledge and eternal wisdom forever and ever. The winner believers will eat of something that those who are saved but suffer loss of all rewards cannot have.

"Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33)

"Confess" implies having precise obedience to Jesus Christ in each thing we are supposed to do, by grace through faith, because we love Him.

If I am asked to go soul winning or on visitation and I do it, I confess a precise act of obedience before Jesus. Jesus then tells the Father, so any obedience can be credited toward the order of the Morning Star.

Every act of denial or disobedience is also recorded, because it subtracts from the potential for the Morning Star Order.

People need to be stirred up with this message. Be an edifier when you speak! (Ephesians 4:29). Say, "Hallelujah!" "Praise the Lord!" "Jesus is coming." Have a prayer meeting, even on the telephone. Be alive, and commit to godly decisions. Talk with other believers, and have communion in the Spirit of God. Act and live as one who has been raised from the dead spiritually (Romans 6:13).

**For more about spiritual thought processes in channels A, B, and C, please read *The Hearing Heart*, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1996.*

Chapter Four

THE QUESTION OF SUFFERING AND DISCIPLINE

If we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12). To suffer with Christ means to take up the Cross—death to self—in every situation, by an act of faith through an eternal purpose. If we take up our codeath and coburial, we “suffer” the exclusion of rights to our self. And if we suffer with Him, we will reign with Him.

Then, in 2 Timothy 3:12 we read, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Once, when I was going through a particularly difficult trial, I said to God, “I don’t like how I am being treated.” He said, “Then get out of the furnace and quit. Are you greater than me? Are your circumstances greater than what I can handle?” Humbled, I got down on my knees and asked for forgiveness.

He said, “If you don’t like the furnace, just

get out—I will let you out anytime you want. But if you are willing to suffer with Me, you can reign with Me.” This is part of God’s order. Would you, by grace and mercy, love to become a member of the Morning Star Order? Then go after it by grace through faith, and not by works.

Divine Discipline: A Process of Grace

People need to grow in their potential in Christ. Discipline is for Christians who are outside of fellowship with the Word of God. It never means a loss of salvation or condemnation. Discipline comes when a believer chooses certain areas of self-preservation through pride, vanity, or self-exaltation.

Godly discipline is defined in Hebrews 12:6-13. First, with God’s precious patience toward us (Romans 15:5) and longsuffering (2 Peter 3:9), come repeated warnings from the Word. Next, He brings multiple warnings that intensify—using disease, accidents, marital difficulties, and financial problems to get our attention.

Keep in mind that many people go through these trials as tests of faith and are *not* being chastised. Satan, on the other hand, works to defeat believers who want to glorify God; so, often, these problems are *not* evidence of chastisement.

After intensified warnings, comes chastisement, which is often marked by mental problems as the mind begins to wander spiritually. During this period of divine discipline, hunger for God decreases, and there is a loss of what was learned experientially and operationally.

After the warnings and the chastisement, if the believer hasn't corrected his course, comes the sad period of scourging (Hebrews 12:6). It is the worst kind of treatment a Christian can experience and one of the last things God allows before physical death. Remember, first there were warnings, then intensified warnings, and chastisement. If warnings are ignored, scourging comes in. Those who are really honest know when they are being scourged.

If we confess and name our sin, seeing it for what it is and dealing with it honestly, then the discipline is lifted. If we have completely repented and yet continue to suffer, we need to understand that the suffering is for our blessing in the Morning Star Order (Job 5:17-18).

Once we have repented, confessed, and forsaken our sin, any suffering we experience is for the glory of God. Even if we fail seven times in a day, when we continue to grow in grace and decrease in ourselves, we will fail less and less

because of the integrity of our walk in the Spirit by faith.

But if, after warning and scourging, a believer continues in his sin, it may become the sin unto physical death. "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1 John 5:16). At that point, God takes the believer home before his time (for that believer's sake), and he suffers the loss of all rewards.

King Hezekiah (Isaiah 38) and King David (Psalm 118:17) came very close to death but repented in time. Yet, Ananias and Sapphira (who were believers) died because of the sin unto physical death (Acts 5). King Saul also died the sin unto physical death (2 Samuel 1:23), and he definitely was a believer.

In 1 Corinthians 11:30-31, the Word speaks of many being weak, sickly and asleep because of taking communion "unworthily." That was chastisement in the midst of one assembly. This church wasn't operating in conjunction as members fitly framed in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 2:21). They were not functioning as members in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27) where God had

placed them (1 Corinthians 12:18). This local assembly was not operating as the *pleroma* of God, manifesting the nature and attributes of the Almighty. They were saved and enjoyed the benefits of grace, but they did not reveal grace to glorify God in the details of life, and they were sinning against God continually in that specific area.

Patience Has a Perfect Work

Our first marriage was to the Old Sin Nature and its counselor was the Law (Romans 7). Our works were of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Our second marriage, however, will be to Jesus Christ. Our counselor is the Holy Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit are the works of the second marriage (Galatians 5:22-24). We can recover and rebound; we can name and forsake our sins, interrupting the chain of discipline. Chain discipline develops when there is bitterness, when we blame others, and when we bring up the failures of others to distract from our own lack of obedience to God. It comes when we are full of jealousy and envy.

When we forsake and name our sin, God immediately turns our life into a blessing. "For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and

faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin" (Hebrews 12:3-4).

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

So we are to lay aside the sin that so easily besets us and run with patience the race set before us, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

James agreed when he said that the trial of our faith works patience. Therefore, "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be [mature] and entire, [lacking] nothing" (James 1:3-4). Know this: Obedience is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

What is God after in these last days? Faithfulness to His Word, His headship, and His assembly. Be faithful to the Truth and it will set you free. Truth doesn't lead us into bondage, though that is what Satan tries to tell us. Truth brings true liberty so we can be transformed into His glory.

CONCLUSION

In the latter days, many will depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1). When Christ comes back, there will be hardly such a thing as faith (Luke 18:8). The love of many will wax cold (Matthew 24:12). In Revelation 3:14, the last church Jesus addressed was Laodicean—the church that was neither hot nor cold but lukewarm. Apostasy and lukewarmness will prevail in the last days, and many Christians will be spiritually asleep.

“Wherefore he saith, *Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead*, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:14-18).

The divine will and government of God have no power in our responsibilities unless we have

positive volition toward Him. God can say anything, be anything, and do anything, but if we don't have positive volition toward Him, nothing works.

In a marriage, God's essence has to be imparted in God's loving order. First, the husband is to treat his wife in the love of Christ. Then, every wife is to give reverence to her husband, or she is a rebel. God's plan will never be effective as long as the volition isn't positive toward God's order. A wife can destroy the family by degrees if continually she does not respect her husband's headship and love.

The blessings of obedience are limited to free volitional behavior patterns. No one has to respond to spiritual authority; but if they do, nothing can stop them from being blessed spiritually, physically, and financially in the perfect will of God. Until we submit to spiritual authority on every level—at work, at church, and at home—spiritual production will not come. In every area of life, even in business we conduct day to day, we are to submit to those over us with respect. Then, fruitfulness can abound.

Do you want to receive the Morning Star Order? Then purpose that no matter what struggles or battles come, no matter what has to be

excluded from your life, you will do what is necessary to be a candidate for the greatest reward. Go after the prize of the high calling.

Dear heavenly Father, thank You for blessing us with abundant spiritual lives to become Morning Star Christians for eternity. Thank You that when we have recognized our death, burial, and resurrection with Jesus Christ, we can go after the greatest reward—eternal fellowship with You at the Tree of Life. In Jesus' name, Amen.