



A Measure of Grace

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A Publication of Where Grace Abounds

Grace Is Power In Our Weakness *by Mary Heathman*

In his painting, *Forgiven*¹, the artist portrays Jesus as Strength Itself² standing close behind and literally holding up the entire weight of a man who has clearly collapsed with exhaustion. Notice Jesus' arms wrapped around the body, supporting it against His own. The man's rib cage is firmly supported by our Lord's right arm and hand; the head falls back against Jesus' shoulder as the Lord's left arm and hand clasp the shoulder and upper body tightly against Him. In the man's hands are a sledge-hammer and large nail. The image portrays Jesus' compassionate strength working *up close and personal* on behalf of a man who has worn himself out crucifying the very Lord who now upholds him.

When I looked up the picture at the Dayspring website, I viewed a slide show that describes the symbolism behind the image. As the camera zoomed in on the head and shoulders of Jesus and the man, the word "Grace" came across the screen. Apparently my sense of the message of this picture matches the artist's original intent: **Grace is Strength Itself made perfect in our weakness.**³

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This powerful image rests on the mantel in my office and never ceases to catch the attention of the first-time visitor. Sometimes, a man or woman is distracted by the picture, and I have learned to wait quietly while they study it. Frequently, emotion is triggered, often expressed through words such as, "I feel like that guy; I wish I could feel the Lord holding me up like that."

We all have had times when we were the weakest we have ever been and yearned for some tangible touch from God. It is especially when we are most aware of, and acknowledge, our own powerlessness that we most deeply crave His strength.

I am reminded of Elijah, on the heels of one of his most dramatic victories in which he faced down the prophets of Baal. After the prophets had failed to bring down a response from their own god, Baal, Elijah prayed, "*Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.*"⁴ And the Lord responded: "*Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!'*"⁵

What power, what strength the Lord demonstrated there at the altar! Elijah must have been flying high—in fact we know he was physically strengthened, maybe supernaturally, for the Scripture tells us that "*The power of the LORD came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak*

into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel."⁶ (By the way, Ahab was in a chariot!)

Yet, in spite of all that he had seen of God's power, when Elijah heard Jezebel had vowed to kill him, he ran for his life!⁷ The prophet had been a witness of God's immense power, had even experienced miracles, but hadn't yet reached the bottom of his own resources. He wasn't desperate for God's grace—instead he took matters into his own hands; he ran!

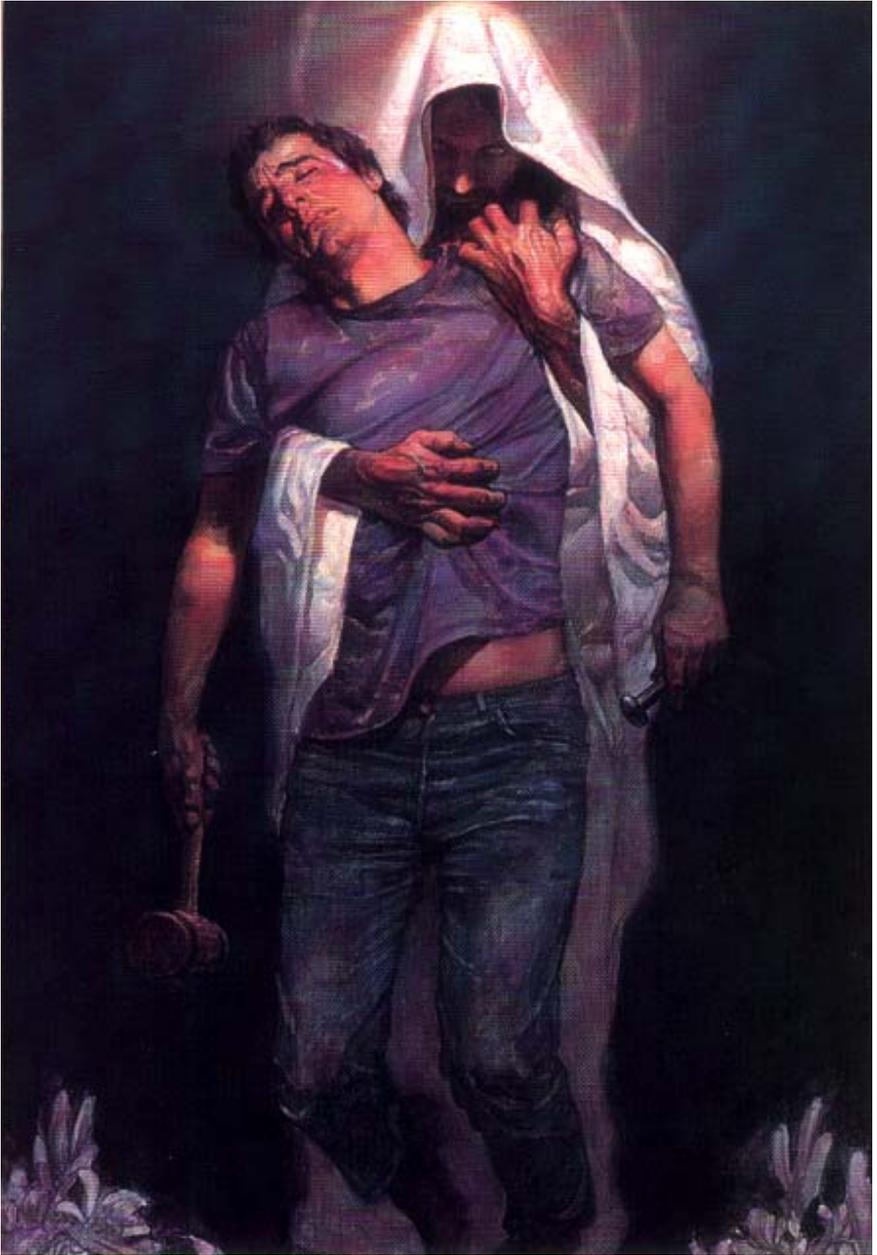
Running till he was exhausted, Elijah finally sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die, "*I have had enough, LORD,' he said, 'Take my life.'*" Then he lay down and went to sleep. While he was asleep, an angel touched him and said, "*Get up and eat.*" At his head he found fresh baked bread and a jar of water. He ate and drank and lay down again. The angel woke him a second time and said, "*Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.*" Elijah ate and drank again, then traveled almost six weeks until he reached a cave on Mount Horeb.⁸

The grace of God envelops us when we least deserve it, when we have run away from Him, when we exhaust all our own resources before turning to Him. In face of our rejection, He draws us close to His heart, sustaining us, filling the vacuum of our weakness with His strength.

It was on Mount Horeb that Elijah was to learn another lesson about God's strength.

. . . *the Lord spoke to Elijah, "Go out*

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“Forgiven”

By Thomas Blackshear II

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a division of DaySpring Cards, Inc. www.dayspring.com

A Parent's Story

By a WGA Supporter

In the summer of 1992, after returning home from a glorious vacation, we were so thankful for the time with each other away from our busy schedules. Our sons were grown and things seemed so right with our little portion of the world. Then the news came from a total stranger, ***“Did you know your son is gay?”*** I politely said, *“Thank you for letting us know”* and said good-bye. Once off the phone, I fell to the floor in tears, devastated! So began our journey through the emotional roller coaster ride of learning about homosexuality and its destructive power on lives - not only on the one struggling in this area, but on the whole family. Where did we fail? Were we too strict, too lenient? Did we give too much, or too little?

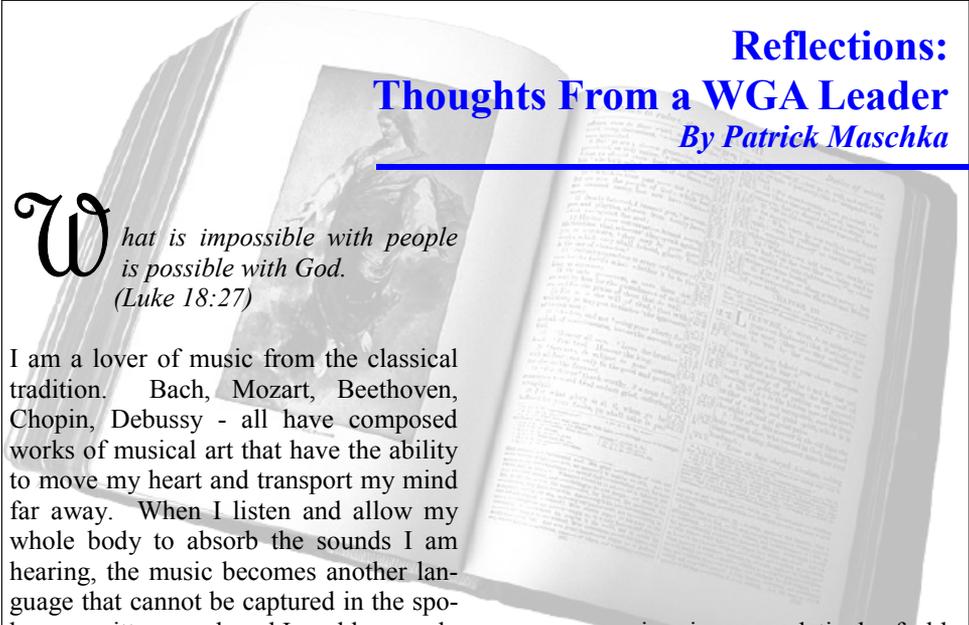
Prior to finding out this news, our neighbor gave me a book entitled, *Where Does A Mother Go To Resign?* by Barbara Johnson. She had just read it and thought I might enjoy it. See how God prepared me without my even realizing it? I read through it with much laughter and tears, returned the book to her and said, *“Thanks, it was great!”* A week later came our news; what could I do? Where could I go? What other Christian parents were struggling in this area? Even our pastor struggled to know how to help us. Then I remembered that Barbara Johnson had an 800 number one could call for her newsletter “Spatula Ministries.”

“Don’t let this pain be for nothing, and let us be a help to some other parents who are just learning similar news.”

For those of you who don’t know Barbara, she is a mom who had three sons. One she lost in Vietnam, another was killed by a drunk driver, and the third she lost to the gay lifestyle. Her newsletter was to encourage parents who had gay/lesbian kids. I immediately called the number and left a message. It wasn’t much later that she took the time from her busy schedule to call me direct from California. This newsletter became my lifeline for many years; each month I eagerly waited to receive it. All along, not understanding why God put it in my life, I always said, *“God, use it for your glory. Don’t let this pain be for nothing, and let us be a help to some other parents who are just learning similar news.”*

We found “Where Grace Abounds” quite by accident; or should I say, by coincidence, but it was really a “God-incident.” We had ordered several tapes from Exodus International to help us more fully understand the emotional needs of our son. While listening to one of those tapes, the couple mentioned a ministry in Colorado called “Where Grace Abounds.” My spirit jumped within me, because our son lives there. I backed up the tape and took down the information. That very day I called the number and talked with a wonderful young man; I’m sure I talked his ear off with all my ques-

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Reflections: Thoughts From a WGA Leader

By Patrick Maschka

What is impossible with people
is possible with God.
(Luke 18:27)

I am a lover of music from the classical tradition. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Debussy - all have composed works of musical art that have the ability to move my heart and transport my mind far away. When I listen and allow my whole body to absorb the sounds I am hearing, the music becomes another language that cannot be captured in the spoken or written word, and I could never do justice to the experience by trying to explain it. Sometimes I find myself thinking that there has to be a God because of these sounds, because there is no other way they could exist.

My clichéd ponderings about music become, strangely, an issue of faith. In this life, during which I have spent a great deal of energy attempting to control my circumstances and find explanations for my sufferings, beautiful music reminds me that there are yet unexplained mysteries in the world. When one looks at the printed notes of a score, it seems impossible that the sounds they represent could inspire spectacular visions, call to mind vivid memories, and arouse passionate emotions. However seemingly impossible, though, musical notes come alive for me and many others every day.

In our text, Jesus is comforting those who were lamenting the seeming impossibility of salvation. With God, the impossible is commonplace, and we cannot

even conceive in our relatively feeble minds his capabilities and what he has in store for us (see 1 Cor 2:9). From the world's viewpoint, it really is not possible for a "homosexual" man to marry a woman and raise a family; that is a crazy, ridiculous idea. For the impossibilities of an alcoholic recovering from a lifelong addiction, or a child raised by abusive parents developing healthy adult relationships, the world offers the solutions of twelve-step programs and years on a therapist's couch. These modern, earthly resources are valuable tools, but I am convinced that our God is in the business of impossibilities made possible by his saving grace alone. When we cry out and surrender the impossible in our lives to him, I am sure it is music to his ears.



(Parent's continued from page 4)

tions, and finally asked him to put our son on their prayer list.

That was the beginning of a relationship with new brothers/sisters in the Lord. People who had the same desire as we -- to see people set free from the bondage of broken sexuality. We had done all we humanly knew how to do to change our son's mind, with little success. The hardest thing for a parent (especially a mom) is to let go and let God do the work! Dads have their own struggles in trying to understand WHY? We were always there to put Band-Aids on boo-boos, there to give a hug when they come home from school because someone had hurt their feelings. But neither Mom, nor Dad, could fix this one! It was going to take help from the rest of the Body of Christ.

When we realized that WGA, a part of the Body of Christ, had been put into our lives at this time, we decided to sow into the ministry that God had provided. WGA had been placed there to fulfill the wishes of our heavenly Father. In the Bible we learn from Jesus when He said, "*Peter...I have pleaded in prayer for you, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen and build up your brothers*" (Luke 22:32 Amplified Bible). That is what WGA is doing. They are being strengthened and encouraged in their own struggles and finding freedom. They are now available to minister to our sons/daughters!! How wonderful that they're willing to be God's vehicle to see people set free!

Mom, Dad, **DON'T EVER GIVE UP!!** God told Joshua as he prepared to go into battle, "Be strong and courageous!" (Joshua 1:6). God wanted

Joshua to know, as He wants you to know, that no matter how bad things seem to be, He has not failed you. We have never turned our back on our son and never will. We just will never accept this current way of life. Many times it has cost us months of silence and estrangement. Not on our part, but on his. Time and again he has come back to us asking for forgiveness, saying that our love for him can only be from God. Who else would put up with his actions? Taking a stand always costs something -- not just emotionally and physically, but monetarily. We are so glad that we do not stand alone, but that the folks at WGA stand with us. For this reason, we support WGA financially. (*Might He be asking you to do the same?*)

The above are only a few reasons why we support WGA on a monthly basis. We are so encouraged by the staff, their efforts for the Lord and their prayers on our behalf. They are reaching hearts and places that we will never be able to go, and who knows, our child may be in one of those places they go. He may finally hear the words of hope that God and his parents have been trying to give him all these years.

Most of all, we are sincerely grateful to our Lord Jesus Christ for His unfailing love toward us and toward our children. His sacrificial gift at Calvary makes it possible for us to have hope for the future. Our son can be forgiven for all he has done and be reborn in an instant into a new life and commitment to righteousness. He can be assured in a moment that God will help him walk out of his lifestyle and help others do the same.

May God richly bless you and your family for your faithfulness to His word.



(Grace continued from page 2)

and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.⁹

Though the grace of God is strong enough to change the hardest and most fearful heart, it is also intensely personal—the gentlest whisper breathed into ears made humble and receptive by the Whisperer Himself.

When I think of the immensity, the powerful, gentle strength of God’s grace, I am reminded of the words of Madame Guyon, “God is with His people as the ocean is with its waves, sometimes dashing them upon the rocks, other times rolling them out gently upon the sand, but always drawing them back into Himself.” (*Madame Guyon Autobiography*, Moody Press)

I am personally encouraged by the strength of God’s grace, for I know I need it. One of the first Scripture passages I memorized was, “The law came that sin might be exposed, but where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.”¹⁰ It was a relief to know that God’s grace was strong enough to overcome my past, sustain my needs of the moment, and carry me to the place where I can hear His still, small voice

guiding and directing me into a life ever more filled with His truth and grace.

It is my prayer that we, sisters and brothers in Christ, might identify with the Apostle Paul and his words: “*But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I but the grace of God that was with me.*”¹¹

May the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory in Christ, after we have suffered a little while, restore us and make us strong, firm and steadfast.¹²



¹*Forgiven*, created by Thomas Blackshear II in 1993, is published by Day-spring, and is available in local Christian Bookstores.

² “. . . the Strength of Israel he is not a man,” (1 Samuel 15:29 AV)

³ “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2Corinthians 12:9a NIV)

⁴ 1 Kings 18:37

⁵Ibid. 18:38-39

⁶Ibid. 18:46

⁷Ibid. 19:1-3

⁸Ibid. 19:4-8

⁹Ibid. 19:11-13

¹⁰Romans 5:10

¹¹1 Corinthians 15:10

¹²1 Peter 5:12

FEBRUARY AT A GLANCE

February 6-8 - WGA booth and workshops at Christian Ministries Convention

February 6th - Mary speaking at MOPS group in Longmont

February 9th - Speaking to 4th-6th graders at South Fellowship

February 15th - Growth Group begins

February 16th - Booth at missions fair at Trinity Presbyterian Church

February 25-28 - Speaking to class of high school students at Denver Christian High School

February 26th - Speaking to youth group at Cherry Creek Presbyterian Church

Groups, Discipleship Counseling, and Mentoring

Thursday Night Group

February 6th - 25 people

February 13th - 35 people

February 20th - 30 people

February 27th - 38 people

Orientation Meeting—
February 20th - 20 new
people

The WGA staff provided about 10 hours of discipleship counseling and mentoring each week during February.

Sexuality AND THE Church 2003

On Wednesday, May 14th WGA is hosting a seminar for pastors and ministry leaders. Please invite your pastor to join Where Grace Abounds for a morning of education focusing on ministry to the sexually and relationally broken. If you have been blessed by WGA, this will be a great opportunity to introduce your pastor to the ministry. This event is for pastors and Christian leaders.

Wednesday, May 14, 2003
8:30am -12:00pm

First Denver Friends Church

If you are interested in finding out more information for your pastor, please call and ask for a brochure to be sent to you.

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Where Grace Abounds exists to guide and support men and women who seek to understand sexuality and relationship, and to inspire all people to know and personally appropriate God's plan for their sexuality and relationships.

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