



Joy at Pacific Ocean evening before surgery.

GRACE Great Good News!



Joy's first steps in hospital after surgery.

June/July 2002

My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

The objective of this newsletter is to share real life testimonies to joyfully boast in the message of cross that makes a person a new creation, the only true hope for any situation (Galatians 6:14-15). The May GRACE newsletter focused on this message in the context of my wife Joy's back surgery plans. That surgery in San Francisco on June 6 went well, but with two complications. First, the surgery caused a major leak of spinal fluid, which required another surgery on June 13 to repair the leak. That surgery was successful. Then after returning home, a staph infection occurred deep in her incision. Joy was admitted to the hospital for three surgeries to clean out the infection (July 3, 5, and 8). She is now on antibiotics at home and appears to be recovering well. And, while Joy was in the hospital on July 3, her daddy passed away. By the grace of God, Joy is being healed in every way. This newsletter is a testimony of that grace.

Prayer made perfect in weakness

On May 30, the night before Joy and I traveled to San Francisco, we had a special visit with her daddy who was recovering from pneumonia in the hospital. Just before we left, I was led to do something I had never done – I asked Joy's daddy to pray for her. He said, "Sure I will!" As we sat on each side of him, his large, but now bony, farmer's hands reached out to hold Joy's and my hands with all his remaining strength. As he weakly laid flat in the slightly reclined bed, he prayed a most precious prayer (note that he has followed Joy all through her many surgeries since her initial back injury at age 9): "Lord, I come to you like I have done a million times before, asking you to heal my daughter..." He proceeded to pray for Joy in a most humble manner, fully depending on his heavenly Daddy. We did not know it, but that was the last time we would see him alive on this earth.

Oh how Joy cherishes that prayer. God continues to show me and Joy the power of that prayer. We see more clearly that only a weak, broken person can manifest the power of Christ's life. We see prayer now as the miracle that it really is.

This has also helped me realize that prayers and answers to prayer are not two different things. I see now that no person can initiate true prayer...it takes the life of Christ Himself who ever lives in us to make intercession to do this (see Hebrews 7:25). I have wrongly viewed prayer as something I do and answers to prayer as something God does...which tempts me to view myself as separate from God...while the heart of the gospel is that I have been made one with Christ! Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Tennessee, has insightfully said, "The prayer that gets to heaven starts in heaven!"

By the grace of God, I believe I saw the face of God in Joy's daddy, and I knew his prayer was already answered even as he prayed.

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16).

See "Commitment made perfect in weakness" on back.

Commitment made perfect in weakness

It was such a special time for me to be with Joy during all of her surgeries, and an emotionally and physically draining time. It was when I had very little strength that God affirmed His presence and His commitment to me. I have always focused on my finite commitment to God and others...now I see that God wants me to focus on His infinite commitment to me! My focus of committing my finite self-efforts to DO better is being transformed to trusting Christ in His infinite riches to live out His commitment to me and others through me! [Wow, that's a mouthful, so please read it carefully again ☺!] So, God doesn't want my commitment, He simply wants me! Now that's good news! That's grace! And grace is a Person named Jesus who is totally committed to me.

I have discovered that committing my efforts for God is indeed not in the Bible. The only explicit reference to "commitment" is in Psalms 37:5 and Proverbs 16:3 that read "commit your ways and works UNTO THE LORD." This means entrusting (handing over control of) everything (including efforts) TO God; it does not refer to committing over and over again my efforts (working) FOR God.

I hope people see that my commitment to Joy is not of me but is from the life of Jesus Christ in me. Apart from Him, I can do nothing (John 15:5). In the following verse, replace the word "me" with your first name, and realize God's commitment to you.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in ME; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved ME and gave Himself for ME (Galatians 2:20).

I hope this newsletter encourages you.

I yearn to share more through this newsletter of how Joy and I see this ministry unfolding.

You can read a July 20, 2002 newspaper article featuring Christ Life Ministries at www.hendersonvillenevs.com/showsearch.asp?ID=10578

You can also read more information of this ministry at the website www.aelm.org and associated excellent links.