

**LAMPLIGHTER**  
**DECEMBER 2009**

**THEME: “Under God’s Watchful Eye-Living Under Grace”**

**LUKE 12:6-9**

*“And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.”*  
*Romans 11:6*

Dear People of Grace,

One of Hitler’s bodyguards was a man named Kurt Wagner. He adored Hitler and revered him as a god. At the end of the war, with Hitler’s suicide in a Berlin bunker, Kurt’s faith was shattered and he planned his own suicide. Going for a final cup of coffee, he picked up a discarded Gospel tract and read it—first carelessly and then with interest. As a result of what he read, he sought out a pastor who led him to Christ. Kurt was transformed from a hardened man into a peace-loving man. He became a new creation in Christ.

As we gather to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior this Christmas, we remember the grace upon grace that we have received through Him. Luke, in his Gospel, reminds us in 2:10-11, “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.’” You see, each of us is in need of a Savior, for we are by nature objects of wrath. As sinful people who deserve God’s wrath and condemnation, we would be forever lost if it were not by God’s grace.

Yet I am astounded many times when I hear of the work righteous emphasis given by so many evangelists on today’s television. There is a constant striving for fulfilling the law. So many people want to earn their way to heaven. It is part of having our ears tickled as Paul describes to Timothy. They desire to be told that there are things they can do to merit God’s love. If they just follow these ten easy steps, then all will be well. We are in control of our eternal destiny.

However Scripture is quite clear. Paul writes again and again under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: (Eph 2:8-9 NIV) “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- {9} not by works, so that no one can boast.” And, (Rom 11:6 NIV) “And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.” So why do we try to nullify the grace of God by returning to this futile striving of living under the curse of the law? Paul also assures us, (Rom 6:14-15 NIV) “For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. {15} What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!”

Charlie “Tremendous” Jones has come up with a way to tell his entire life history in 15 seconds or less. He says, “I am not what I used to be, I am not what I shall be, but, by the grace of God and through the blood of the Lamb, I shall become what I am supposed to be.” Obviously, Charlie stood in the promises of God given in the Gospel. The very same Gospel that Paul loved when he wrote Romans 1:16-17, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. {17} For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’” Peter encourages us to remain steadfast in this grace when he wrote: (1 Pet 5:12 NIV) “With the

help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.”

As you gather to celebrate God becoming man and dwelling among us, remember the marvelous gift of grace given in His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension where he sits at God’s right hand.

What makes Christianity different from all the other religions of the world? Years ago that very question was discussed at a conference. Some of the participants argued that Christianity is unique in teaching that God became man. But someone objected, saying that other religions teach similar doctrines. What about the resurrection? No, it was argued, other faiths believe that the dead rise again. The discussion grew heated. C. S. Lewis, a strong defender of Christianity, came in late, sat down, and asked, “What’s the rumpus about?” When he learned that it was a debate about the uniqueness of Christianity, he immediately commented, “Oh, that’s easy. It’s grace.”

**Close with prayer, the Lord’s Prayer, Benediction, and Song – #45 “Amazing Grace”**