

“Holy Reset”
Pastor Wally Contreras
July 31, 2022

Numbers 18

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As promised, “Amazing Grace which was originally written by John Newton in the late eighteenth century and then adapted by Chris Tomlin (Amazing Grace - My Chains Are Gone) which we sang on Sunday. According to Hymnary.com, after the death of his godly mother, Newton “joined his father at sea when he was eleven. His licentious and tumultuous sailing life included a flogging for attempted desertion from the Royal Navy and captivity by a slave trader in West Africa. After his escape he himself became the captain of a slave ship. Several factors contributed to Newton's conversion: a near-drowning in 1748, the piety of his friend Mary Catlett, (whom he married in 1750), and his reading of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*”. In 1754 he gave up the slave trade and, in association with William Wilberforce, eventually became an ardent abolitionist”...an amazing, life-changing story. Webster's 1828 dictionary, “amazing” means: “Very wonderful; exciting astonishment, or perplexity.” How amazed am I at God's amazing grace? Explain.

As Pastor Wally pointed out, when it comes to any dealings I have with God, I bring nothing to the table, but do I try to do that anyway? If so, what have I tried to bring to the table? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally asked that I keep 1 Peter 2:9-10 (“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”) How amazed...how astonished am I that I have been called to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called [me] out of darkness into his marvelous light” and how is that going for me? Explain.

Regarding my being a member of “a royal priesthood”, the MacArthur Study Bible points out that “At the present time, the church is a royal priesthood united with the royal priest, Jesus Christ.” R.C. Sproul once pointed out: “God never intended the descendants of Levi to be the only priestly figures in the nation of Israel. In fact, the Lord originally called His people out of bondage in Egypt so that the entire nation would serve Him as ‘a kingdom of priests and a holy nation’ (Ex. 19:1–6). In Christ, there is a true priesthood of all believers. All of us who trust in Jesus alone for salvation have free access into His presence, and all of our lawful vocations are set

apart for true God-honoring service. The janitor who does his work to the Lord is in no worse position spiritually than the most gifted preacher on the planet, for all Christians have been declared righteous servants of the creator God.” Do I see my job or vocation (to include being “retired”) as a source of income or a source of “God-honoring service” and why?

God told Aaron: “And you and your sons with you shall guard your priesthood for all that concerns the altar and that is within the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood as a gift, and any outsider who comes near shall be put to death.” (Numbers 18:7 (ESV) Emphasis added.) Pastor Wally said that Aaron and his sons were to exercise “stewardship” over the holy things in the temple. Does that stewardship command from God apply to my “royal priesthood” today? If so, how so? If not, why not?

1 Peter 2:4 (ESV) tells me: “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” In 1 Peter 2:11 (ESV), Peter tells me: “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.” In what way(s) does this change or expand my response to the previous question?

In Numbers 18:8-20, Scripture tells me that the priests received a portion of the offerings that people brought to the temple as well as the offerings of first fruits and everything that had been devoted to the Lord. In Numbers 18:20-24, the Levites were to receive the tithe that was offered as compensation for their service in the temple. The Levites were then instructed that they were to give a tithe of the tithe to God. One of Pastor Wally’s “so what” points (his exhortations) tells me that I need to ask God to teach me what it means to dedicate “the best part to the LORD. We are quick to talk dollars and cents when it comes to giving, but am I giving Him “the best part” of the income that God has provided me? If so, how so? If not, why not?

When it comes to my time, am I giving Him “the best part” of my time (e.g., when I read His Word or pray) or does it tend to be my leftovers (e.g., when I can squeeze it in)? If so, why so? If not, why not?

When it comes to my energy/efforts (e.g., to obey His commands, serve Him through ministry), am I giving Him “my best part” or something less than my best? Explain.

When it comes to my love and adoration, does He get “my best part” or is He playing second fiddle to something else in my life that gets most of my attention? Explain.

Jesus called out the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 23:23 (ESV) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.” Charles Spurgeon preaching on Zechariah 7:5-6 (“Say to all the people of the land and the priests, ‘When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat for yourselves and drink for yourselves?’”) on March 9, 1862 said this: “You know, brethren, there are various modes in which the Christian Church attempts to worship God; and we are not about this morning to discuss the acceptableness of these different methods—whether it shall be by book or extemporaneous; whether it shall be with sound of music or with the joyous voices of men and women; whether the ceremony shall be pompous or simple; whether it shall be under the consecrated dome, or in an ordinary chamber. These are matters of secondary moment, for they concern only the carcass, while we have now to deal with the soul of worship. We are apt to fall into a mistake, and value the services of the Sabbath-day for something which God does not regard. For instance, in the singing of God’s praises, it is well to have melody that we may sing with our understanding as well as with our spirit; but after all, if any man shall rest satisfied because his voice has been in tune and time, in singing the words of the Psalm, if he shall think that therefore he has praised God, alas, how mistaken he is! Or in the prayer, if we shall think that a certain fluency, an apparent reverence and propriety of expression are the only needful things, and if we forget that we are worshipping God, alas! what is our prayer? We might as well have been dumb. And if in preaching, our hearers shall regard merely the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the eloquence, or the fitness of the style, alas! they have not worshipped God, because in all this they forget the question: — “Have you heard as unto God? Have you sung as unto God? Did you pray as unto God?” For if not, though the sermon be orthodox and eloquent, though the singing be as the voice of many waters, though the prayer go up to heaven, and seem to be unexceptionable in expression, yet the worship is only vain and worthless, lacking holiness unto the Lord, since it is not done as unto God, and is not really an offering unto him.” When it comes to giving God “the best part” of me in my worship, have I at times been neglecting “the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness”? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally highlighted the nature of serving God...it's a gift from God to the church. Ephesians 4:7, 11-14 (ESV) tells me: "But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift...And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes." Pastor Wally said that this reality is very "weighty." Spurgeon asked these questions: "What can you and I say with regard to our lives since we have known the Lord? Have we lived unto Christ? Dare we take the Apostle Paul's motto— "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain?" Oh, beloved, it is not what we have done, so much as with what object we have done it; for every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. Have we in our hearts longed to serve him? "Oh," I hear one say, "it was little I could do, sir; I was poor; I could not give him gold; I was uneducated, I could not give him words." Does Paul's statement give me reason to be His gift to the church by desiring to serve Him as a teacher (or even as a pastor/elder) to build up the body of Christ "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ", or does it give me an excuse to avoid such ministries (or any ministry) and why?

Numbers 14:18 (ESV) tells me that "The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, to the third and the fourth generation". Have I in some way(s) tried to push the envelope of God's mercy and grace because I don't immediately see any consequences for my sin – the "I-didn't-get-hit-with-lightening-so-it-must-be-OK" mindset? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Are there aspects of my life that need a "holy reset" from God? Explain.