

# At What Point?

Before ?

During?

After?

There are three separate and distinct options for seeing grace – before, during or after an “event.”

The non-“believer” doesn’t see grace at any point, rather they believe:

“My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth (as well as any other good things they have) for me.” Deuteronomy 8:17

The Jews, in *Exodus* and *Numbers*, got in trouble time after time because during every trial they faced they failed to “seize” grace – seek and seize it DURING the trial. They would talk big beforehand and could confess it after God accomplished a challenge in their favor, but during a trial they forgot God and either quit in despair or tried to accomplish the impossible through their own wits and power.

The *Bible* says:

“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” 2 Peter 3:18

The order of this growth (assuming a person reaches maturity) is:

First, recognizing, thanking and praising God for PAST grace.

Second, confessing beforehand (before we face a particular trial) an expectation of God’s grace when we need it.

Third, believing during a trial – before the outcome is clear – that:

- ⇒ God is faithful,
- ⇒ It is true that He will never leave nor forsake us,
- ⇒ He will deliver us from the evil one,
- ⇒ . . .

In its essence, faith is simply a belief in the grace of God.

Trials throw us off-balance – mature faith will fight to re-establish its equilibrium of believing in God by:

- ⇒ being realistic, but not obsessing, about the trial at hand,
- ⇒ replaying God’s past faithfulness,
- ⇒ rehearsing His promises of deliverance,
- ⇒ “seeking first” so that the assurance that all things (including this trial) will work together for good . . . in this situation.

Too often, in the midst of the trial, we do just the opposite:

- ⇒ forget God,
- ⇒ by “hook or crook” try to extricate ourselves from the trial only to find ourselves in worse trouble,
- ⇒ get to the point of despair, with no option, and FINALLY call out to God for His salvation.

The more mature the Christian, the sooner the “finally” point comes. Trials do and will throw us off-balance – the issue is at what point (how quick) do we humble ourselves since:

God gives grace to the humble. Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6 & 1 Peter 5:5

Those with the greatest discipline of “seeking first” in the “good times” have the greatest hope of finding grace, and finding it quickly, when the trial becomes real and imminent. In the same way that the best warrior is the one that has been the most disciplined in preparation before a battle, the person best prepared for spiritual trials is the one most spiritually disciplined in peace-time.

Job faced obstacles and tests few (if any) ever have; he was thrown off-balance and he had to work through these challenges. But from beginning to end he rehearsed and replayed grace (the faithfulness, goodness and love of God). Who would have believed Job would have been better off to “curse God and die”?

When he was rich and healthy, Job practiced the spiritual discipline that saw him successfully through the miserable trials he faced – he accomplished the *Deuteronomy 10* faith test:

What does the LORD your God ask of you but to –

- Fear the LORD your God,
- Walk in all his ways,
- Love him,
- Serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, and
- Observe the LORD'S commands and decrees given for our own good.

He was faithful BEFORE the trial in praise, prayer, *Bible* reading, church attendance, helping the poor . . . in short, devoting his time, money and emotions to the things of God so that DURING a severe trial he was able to call on these disciplines to get him through without forgetting and cursing God!

“Growing in grace” is largely learning how to apply faith to more and more of our lives. If the faith we profess in the past and future does not help us in present troubles it is a misplaced faith – while in trials we may not “get it” immediately, we should quickly re-establish a meaningful equilibrium of believing God is both able and willing to “see us through” whatever challenges us. Seeking grace, and its faith, never ends because the trials never end! Humility is knowing we do not have what it takes to meet the challenges we face.

Seeking first – practicing the spiritual disciplines in good times – helps us overcome the spiritual attention deficit disorder we ALL have. At what point do we see grace as the answer to what faces us? Hopefully, sooner than we have in the past!

Thanking God for His past and future grace is important; but even more crucial is trusting Him during a trial – we can only hope to do this by “practicing,” developing the disciplines (the tools) of combat, in the good times.