

YOUR GRACE STILL WELCOMES ME

THOUGHTS BY MAJOR DENISE WALKER

HEBREWS 4:16 (TPT)

"So now we draw near freely and boldly to where grace is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness."

I could feel the burning sting of humiliation creeping up my neck and onto my cheeks as the tears began to flow. Out of anger, I had dug in my heels – my stubborn pride refusing to admit I was wrong – until I heard the quiet, tender voice of God setting me straight. So there I was, once again, kneeling in penitence - seeking God's forgiveness and desperately wanting a chance to start again.

There is nothing worse than feeling like you've failed God or disappointed Him in some way... again. You may even echo the words of Paul found in Romans 7:15 – "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (NIV)

We are not alone in this struggle. King David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of God, but God told him, "You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood" (1 Chronicles 28:3). Peter attempted to prove his loyalty to the Messiah by attacking a temple guard the night of Jesus' arrest, but Jesus rebuked him, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (John 18:11) Saul set out to defend God's honour by hunting down and destroying the followers of The Way, but Jesus stopped Saul in his tracks on the road to Damascus - "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4)

All three men loved God with all their heart – passionate and zealous to please and serve Him. Yet in their brokenness and sin, their own plans were at odds with God's. How wonderful that this was not the end of their story! God chose King David's son as the builder of His house. Jesus forgave and restored Peter over breakfast on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus confirmed in Saul a mission and purpose that would take the message of God's saving grace far beyond the chosen people to every corner of the earth. Things may not have turned out as the men had planned or imagined – but Jesus showed them a better way, an even more glorious plan, and a purpose beyond their imagining.

The key was their willingness to trust God's unwavering love – allowing Him to refocus their vision and plans to God's. God hasn't changed. Jesus still speaks to His people today. The Holy Spirit continues to transform us, lead us, and prompt us to action – when we too acknowledge our sin and weakness and trust them to God's mercy and grace. Louise Mathieson's reworking of a classic from John Gowans gives us the words to help us in those moments where we find ourselves needing to surrender once again.

*Nothing can I achieve, nothing attain; Building without You, I've laboured in vain.
Shatter my poor design, shaping Your plan divine, Saviour, restore again these ruins of mine.*

*So Lord, I cling to You again, Your grace still welcomes me.
So beautiful, Your mercy. Jesus says, "Forgiven," and I am free.*

*My limited gifts are now Yours to be used. Your loving demands on me, I won't refuse;
Take all there is of me, take all I hope to be; Your way at last I see, Your way I will choose.*

"JESUS HAS ALREADY ACCOMPLISHED MY FORGIVENESS, BUT EVERY TIME I CLING TO HIM ANEW, I TAKE HOLD OF THE PROMISE AGAIN THAT I CAN FREELY AND CONFIDENTLY MEET HIS MERCY AND GRACE WHICH ALLOWS ME TO STAND AND MOVE FORWARD WITH HIM." - LOUISE MATHIESON