

**Introduction – Read and Report: *Healing Grace* – David A. Seamands**

*“My hope is built on nothing less, Than Jesus’ **blood** and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus’ Name.  
On Christ the solid rock I stand; All other Ground in sinking sand,  
All other ground is sinking sand.”<sup>1</sup>*

For some, the mere mention of blood would arouse an uncomfortable feeling where one would simply choose to avoid discussing such things. In the mire of this politically correct society, where all sensibilities are catered to, vital concepts such as the shedding of blood are relegated to the proverbial backburner. For someone today to say that their hope rests in a “fountain filled with Immanuel’s blood” would no doubt cause of murmur among the crowd. In today’s Church culture this type of language is rarely used or employed in preaching and teaching efforts. A softer and gentler lexicon is emphasized forcing these concepts to the far reaches of the Kingdom realm. Those who authored hymns like “The Solid Rock” had no issue whatsoever emphasizing the shed blood of Christ. In fact, it seems the overwhelming evidence one discovers when perusing the tattered pages of the ephemeral pew hymnal leans in the direction of this concept claiming a spot at the peak of their theology. The Church today could take a lesson or two from these authors. These hymns which clearly speak of the substitutionary atonement provided by the blood of Christ expound upon true Biblical grace which brings about emotional and spiritual healing for the hearer. In his book, *Healing Grace*, David Seamands explains; “Early in my ministry I discovered that the experience of grace is the most therapeutic factor in emotional and spiritual healing. A doctor who works in a mental hospital in Tennessee put it this way, “Half of my patients could go home in a week if they knew they were forgiven.”<sup>2</sup> Using the old standard hymns as a tie that binds one chapter to another Seamands details the process of this emotional and spiritual healing. The evaluation of this process has provided me

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<sup>1</sup> *Hymns of Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tabernacle Publishing Company, 1980) 215.

<sup>2</sup> David A. Seamands, *Healing Grace* (Indianapolis, IN: Light and Life Communications, 1999,2002) 7.

with the opportunity to gather some new insights, to obtain some useful tools and ideas for my ministry, to foster some disappointments with certain positions, and finally, to continue have some questions which remain unanswered. Therefore, it is the aspiration of this brief report to comment on the four previously mentioned areas of evaluation.

### **New and Different Ways of Thinking – Healing Grace**

Seamands begins each chapter with a verse from an old standard hymn summarizing the main content of each chapter. Right off the bat he brings out a great point concerning the state of affairs where many people find themselves. He terms this state of affairs as ‘the performance trap.’<sup>3</sup> The results of this trap are varied and quite serious. Seamands details his findings of a particular subject caught in this morass; “his never ending battle with the tyranny of the oughts; his overhanging sense of guilt and condemnation; a high level of anxiety; denial and repression of negative emotions such as anger or depression; and a legalism and scrupulosity resulting from a damaged oversensitive conscience.”<sup>4</sup> Another interesting insight brought out here in this encounter was his description of a common misunderstanding of the manner in which Church counseling often takes shape; “So I began to counsel him the only way I knew. Like many pastors, I thought counseling was a one-to-one preaching session with a captive audience.”<sup>5</sup> This brought to light for me a common mistake which ministers make which could be rectified by this statement; hush up and listen! Far too often we are too hasty to offer solutions when we haven’t really even discovered the true problem. Soap boxes have little to no place in this dynamic. Another interesting dynamic described by Seamands was the comparison/contrast of a servant and a son.<sup>6</sup> The nature of the relationship here became paramount for the counselee to discover

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 23-24.

the freedom that true grace provides. As sons and daughters we are engaged in a relationship where grace continues to flow as time passes. This realization is an instrumental understanding in freeing someone from the performance trap. Early in the book, Seamands does an excellent job of describing and detailing the dynamics of the American/Western Worldview and how this worldview impacts ones view of grace. For the most part, this worldview hampers the proper understanding of grace in three primary values of Western Society. Self-reliance, individualism, and activism<sup>7</sup> are the three values which may do well for living in this society but conflict with understanding grace in the context of the body of Christ. Each of these in their own way creates a barrier in the mind of the performance driven person concerning God's favor. Understanding these potential pitfalls and barrier allows the counselor to more effectively aid in healing. One of the statements that Seamands makes combating the value of individualism is that grace is received and lived out in a community of faith. The body of believers is the context where grace is made manifest. One highly impactful ideal which is brought out in chapter seven is where the character of grace is labeled as un-earnable, undeserved, or unmerited. This is a fairly common understanding among Christianity. However, the next characteristic which really seems to not be understood is that grace is un-repayable.<sup>8</sup> This really sheds some interesting light on what seems to be a common mistake Christians make in their motivation for good works. These individuals attempt to turn grace into a promissory note where those believe that have received grace but have to somehow pay back as a means of staying saved. The mixing of grace and law has been a problem since the dawn of the Church and continues still in some form or another. The final way in which this book has brought new understanding to me is the way in which people develop a view of God and His grace through family life. The ways which grace is displayed properly or

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 31-32.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 114

improperly greatly determine how an individual will approach the Christian life. Understanding this dynamic is crucial in aiding people in experiencing grace the way God intended.

### **Concepts Which Will Prove Useful in my Ministry – *Healing Grace***

Not every person in ministry has had or will have the opportunity to counsel someone regarding these tough issues. As was mentioned in his dealings with the fellow from chapter one many difficult and serious issues arise from an improper understanding of grace. Therefore, this is a task and opportunity that one should not take lightly in any form. Even if a person in ministry does not have the opportunity to counsel on a formal or informal basis, the teachings found within this book can prove to be valuable first to myself, but then also to the person with whom I may be privileged to share. That being said, I am thankful that God has given me the opportunity to share with people in the past and hopefully in the future. Seamands has provided me with some solid ideas and methods in order to communicate more properly the healing power of God's grace. One of the most useful tools in understanding grace is that healing happens from the personal offering of grace one to another. The ability and willingness to forgive and to act graciously to our fellow man is a unique opportunity for the soul to experience what grace truly means. Once grace is properly understood on a personal level, then the obvious outpouring of this understanding should be the completion of the circle where grace is made manifest in our lives with those whom we contact. No doubt this provides a context of healing and restoration vertically to God but also healing and restoration of our relationships to our fellow man on a horizontal level. Another highly useful idea was the concept of 'no quick fixes.'<sup>9</sup> This dynamic for me is of vital importance as patience can be in short supply. Sometimes the Band-Aid method is the all too uncomplicated and undemanding path which I choose. Understanding the dynamics of worldview and parental/personal history having deep roots and therefore can't be

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 20.

repaired quickly helps to under gird the need for a pragmatic step by step process where grace can be taught, modeled, and internalized not just as a matter of the mind but as a matter of the heart and mind. Also, when dealing with the Western Worldview, Seamands talks about the Gospel of Success.<sup>10</sup> This is an important dynamic for me to remember that success as the Western mind defines it has little to nothing to do with the way in which the God's Word would define success. Success and excellence according to God's standard has little to do with results and much more to do with motivation and effort. Hanging my hat on what the world perceives as success will lead me down a road of disappointment and stress, whereas hanging my hat on God's principles will lead me down a road of fulfillment and freedom. One final note that could prove to be a vital tool in ministry is the ideas centering on parental grace and the formation of self, providing some interesting foundational material for a class on parenting. The information in this chapter seems to be an excellent explanation of how parental nurture or the lack thereof can deeply shape an individual and their attitude toward God and His grace.

### **Disappointments with the Text – *Healing Grace***

My disappointments with the material were few and in some cases mildly refuted by later statements that Seamands made. This is a minor contention on my part, but on page 12-13 Seamands seems to belittle the place of Christian Counseling as only capable of dealing with certain situations. However, later in the text he seems to rely solely on God's word as the basis for understanding, evaluating, and solving mankind's issues such as in chapter 4 where he details the results of the fall from perfection as this is the basis for emotional and spiritual problems. Another minor issue is his use of the word pastor in referring to the preacher. While almost all of Christendom has adopted this term to describe the preacher, I still hold to the Biblical teaching where this word applies solely to the elders/pastors/shepherds of a given congregation. Most

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 35.

would deemphasize this issue, but I have determined through my own studies that there are many unfortunate dynamics which flow from the misuse of this word, primarily church polity issues. Another minor detail was in chapter seven where he is discussing the issues of failure and God's unconditional love. I thought this section would be a great opportunity to discuss our relationship to God like that of a marriage. Individual failures within the marriage don't immediately remove you from that covenant relationship. The example of a husband and wife in this discussion for me provides such a brilliant picture of how we are to relate to our failures. When we are bound to Christ our failures don't negate grace or the covenant. That being said it was a minor disappointment in this given section. All in all, I was impressed with the overall work.

### **Questions that Remain – Healing Grace**

Unfortunately, I really don't have any lingering questions concerning this text. The work as a whole does a nice job of detailing not only his conclusions but the processes which undergird his findings.

### **Conclusion – Healing Grace**

In order to come full circle and to honor the format of Seaman's book, it seems fitting to close with a verse from an old-time favorite hymn. Again, it should be noted, today's Church could learn quite a lot from the background, motivation, and theology which fostered these words;

*“My faith has found a resting place, Not in device nor creed;  
I trust the Ever-living One, His wounds for me shall plead.  
I need no other argument, I need no other plea,  
It is **enough** that Jesus died, And that He die for **me**”<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> *Hymns of Faith* (Carol Stream, IL: Tabernacle Publishing Company, 1980) 58.