

by Jim  
Fowler

# AMBULANCE IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR



In the rearview mirror of my automobile I could see that the emergency vehicle was rapidly approaching behind me. I could tell that it was an ambulance because they had printed the word “AMBULANCE” on the bug deflector above the front grille of the vehicle. This allowed me to read the word “AMBULANCE” in the reverse image of my rearview mirror. What a clever idea to give drivers like me the convenience of a quick recognition that an ambulance is approaching from behind and advise us of our responsibility to get out of its way.

This is all the more necessary because some rearview mirrors have an attached warning: “CAUTION: Objects in the mirror may be closer than they appear.” Although the ambulance may appear to be quite a distance behind one’s vehicle, in actuality it may be only half of the perceived distance, requiring a quick



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reaction time to avoid hindering the emergency vehicle on its lifesaving mission.

The aforementioned incident and observation are not unlike what happens in our Christian lives day-by-day and moment-by-moment. In the midst of the journey of life there are things that come up from behind us, perhaps unexpectedly surprising us and taking us off

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guard. They do not have this convenient label of "GRACE."

If they had such a reverse identification label we might be able to quickly recognize in our spiritual rearview mirror that the approaching object or situation was the GRACE of God. The perceived imminent necessity of reacting to these unlabeled situations of life is intensified by the fact that "objects

in the mirror may be closer than they appear." Hence, we sometimes have the feeling of anxiety or panic that we are in danger of being overwhelmed or run-over by the approaching emergency vehicle.

#### **Grace Perspectives**

The grace of God does not arrive in our lives in a conveniently marked package with a full set of instructions detailing what God is doing

dealing with life, providing the "how to" guidelines for every situation, it just doesn't work that way. It's not as easy as repeating the mantra, "if all else fails, read the instructions."

Divine situations are more like a mystery box that has no feasible way to be opened. It seems to be sealed to all human attempts to unravel its contents and meaning. God's grace works in ways that are mysterious to our finite understanding.

*My thoughts are not your thoughts* (Isaiah 55:8—all passages are from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted).

*His ways are past finding out* (Romans 11:33).

Yet, religion has repetitively insisted that it is incumbent upon Christian people to figure out God's ways—to determine what God is doing in their lives, what God wants to teach them—and then, to respond in a proper manner that facilitates God's work. What a fallacy! God's grace-work is not facilitated by our understanding or our assistance!

How tragic that Christians have been so indoctrinated about knowing God's will that they can only make sense of their lives by concluding, "If only I had more faith, I would understand. If only I was more spiritual, I could understand God and his ways."

NO! The objective is not that we should understand what God is doing, but that we should faithfully stand under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, trusting in and accepting his loving grace in our lives, whatever might occur.



and how we are to react to what God is doing. Despite the religious folk who think that the Bible serves as the instruction book for

## The Swinging Bridge of Grace

The classic book by St. John of the Cross, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, indicates that we are often in the dark about what God is doing in our lives. God often does not see fit to grant us any cognitive understanding of what he is doing in his grace. In fact, to go one step farther, we might assert that God intends for us to live in the insecurity of not knowing what he is doing, or what he will do next. We shake our heads at the curve balls that he throws our way. We stand, almost paralyzed with fear, on the swinging-bridge of God's grace. God orchestrates situations in our lives that force us to trust him—remember Jonah?

The world and its reasoned religion attempts to make everything in life predictable—calculated by the probability of success. There is nothing more monotonously predictable than the prescribed performance of legalistic religion. Living in God's grace, on the other hand, is gloriously unpredictable—hang on for the ride! God's grace-action cannot be formularized or figured out.

As we face the situations of life head-on, we are often bewildered, befuddled, or confused.

### Walking By Faith

"Where is God's grace in this calamity or catastrophe? Can anything good come out of this terrible situation? Everything appears hopeless!" *For now we see only a reflection in a mirror...* (1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV), and continue to *walk by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Sometimes, by God's grace, we are allowed to look back with 20/20 hindsight and see what God, by his grace, was doing in the past—how he was, indeed, working all things together for his good

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**Sometimes, we never do see how the pieces of the puzzle fit together, but we know that "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 10:13) to do his work in our lives.**



**We must keep looking and moving forward, fixing our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2).**

(Romans 8:28) and that our difficult situation was actually a blessing in disguise. When we are permitted such a retrospective of God's work in our lives we have seen "grace in the rearview mirror."

Sometimes, we never do see how the pieces of the puzzle fit together, but we know that "God is faithful" (1 Corinthians 10:13) to do his work in our lives. Our responsibility should always be a willingness to allow him to do what he wills, availability to his ability, and continued receptivity to his activity. In short, this is the faith that accepts God's grace.

We must keep looking and moving forward, *fixing our eyes on Jesus* (Hebrews 12:2, NIV).

*...Forgetting those things which are behind...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).*

But, we always appreciate those occasions when God graciously gives us a glimpse of his "grace in the rearview mirror." □

*Jim Fowler is a husband, father, grandfather, theologian, author and former pastor whose Christ in You ministry can be found at [www.christinyou.com](http://www.christinyou.com). Jim serves as PTM's theological consultant.*