

When I Think of God's Grace *by Linda Small - Sadler*

When I think of God's Grace, and all that He has done for me, my soul cries out "Hallelujah".

On September 11, 1984, I was a victim of a violent crime. The violent act was devastating and it changed me forever.

When you have had a close call with death as I have, you start to re-think your life. I started to think about what is really important to me in terms of the way I live my life. I began to appreciate good health, family, values, and good friends and last but really first, is Jesus.

I learned to perceive people correctly. I refer to that as a Spirit of Discernment. Discernment also includes the ability to identify the true nature of a spirit, doctrine, practice, or group; distinguish truth from error, extreme error from slight error, the divine from the human and the demonic. With the Spirit of discernment you are able to exhibit keen insight and good judgment.

As a result of surviving a violent crime, I learned to forgive people who hurt me or say bad things about me. I learned to forgive people for whatever they say, do, don't say, or don't do. The reason I learned to forgive completely is because God forgives me, "daily". I don't deserve His forgiveness but He forgives me anyway. So since God forgives me, I will forgive others, lest I be made out to be a hypocrite.

On September 11, 1984, I was robbed, shot six times and left for dead. I will never forget that day. I was complaining about my life to The Lord. I paced my living room floor and complained. My business had suffered an enormous loss that month. I complained, "no business this month." I had only earned \$100 for the entire month. In anger I asked, Lord, what's next?

Be careful what you ask for. Around 11:00 A.M., I received a telephone call from someone I thought was a friend. She asked me to come over to her house at 12:30 A.M. This so-called friend said that she knew a woman that needed some janitorial work done and this woman wanted me to come over for an estimate. When I pulled up to the house, this so-called friend (a wolf in sheep's clothing) beckoned for me to open the passenger side of my car. When I opened the car door, her boyfriend stuck his hand in the door. He had a gun, an automatic weapon.

He shot me once in my right arm (at point blank range). He was really aiming at my head but through guidance from Jesus, a quick reflex, I held my arm up to block the bullet. He proceeded to shoot me until he emptied out the gun in my body. He shot me once in my right arm, three times in my stomach, and once in my hip. I fell from the car, face down in a pool of blood, and as he ran, he shot one last bullet into my buttock. I had been robbed. As I lay there on the ground bleeding to death, I knew that I was going to die. I suddenly thought about how my brother and I were no longer speaking to each other over a major misunderstanding on his part.

My brother had misplaced his cocaine and accused me of taking it or stealing it. I told him that I did not steal his cocaine but he did not believe me. He shot up so much he was beginning to hallucinate about events that were not real.

Understand that my brother "shot up" cocaine mixed with heroin. He was not the same as he was before the drugs. We had a fight over drugs! Before that time period, before the drugs, we were very close.

Some of my brothers but not all, abused drugs. One of my brothers (the oldest) was wiser than the rest of us because he did not use drugs . . . Satan knows how to trap us. I had never stolen anything from anybody so I suspect Satan was planting the lie in my brother's head about me simply to divide us and steal our lives.

At that moment it did not matter who was right and who was wrong. I knew I was dying and I wanted to say I am sorry to my brother. I wanted to say goodbye and beg for forgiveness.

As I lay down in my own blood, I prayed a quick prayer to God. I asked, "God, please don't let me die here. Please Lord, get me up! I NEED TO MAKE PEACE with my brother!"

God immediately helped me up off the ground, inside my car and I drove down the avenue. I had never been really sick in my life so I did not even know the location of a hospital. God told me to go by a house where my brothers spent a lot of their time at getting high all day, but they were not there. This house was like a second home to my brothers.

I knocked on the door and my brother's friend opened the door. He saw that I was covered in blood. He did not have a driver's license so he had a neighbor friend drive him and me to Saint Joseph's hospital. My brother's friend called my brothers and they met him at the hospital and he told them what happened to me.

I told them at the emergency room that I had no insurance. They treated my gun shot wounds as God's grace and mercy moved in the doctors. The doctors and nurses treated me with respect and they waited on me as if I had extra insurance instead of none.

Knowing I had no insurance they still put me in a private room where I was taken care of for an entire week. Their only concern was saving my life. There is no doubt in my mind that God touched the doctors and the nursing staff at Saint Joseph's hospital. Now that *is* Grace. That is what God gave me on that horrible day - *Grace*, an *undeserved* Grace.

This was the time before blood was tested thoroughly and the AIDS virus began being reported here in Denver. I had blood transfusions to replace the blood I lost on the ground, in the cars, and on the way to the hospital. Once again through God's grace and mercy I received untainted blood unlike so many in the 1980's.

When my brother arrived at the hospital, he was so grateful I was alive. We forgave each other for the accusations that were made. On that day we promised each other that we would never let anyone come between us again. My brother promised me that he would never let anyone hurt me again. He said that he would protect me. The differences and accusations between us that had seemed so severe were addressed and dismissed. There is nothing that God cannot do. So what Satan meant for destruction, God meant for restoration.

I believe that nothing short of this tragedy could have brought us back together as a family. Looking at this tragedy from that vantage point, the question of why was I shot was answered.

Six weeks later, my brother was found dead at his home by my youngest brother. The autopsy report gives as the cause of death an overdose of cocaine and staff infections from injecting deadly amounts of cocaine into his body.

If we had not forgiven each other, his death would have DESTROYED ME. The Lord is Good. God watched over me the day I was shot, and He is watching over you and me right now,

too. Praise God! I have learned a lot about God's grace and mercy since that day. I know that God did not have to bless me, but He did.

God blessed me to make a full recovery. All of my brothers searched the neighborhood to make sure the gunman never came back.

The gunman was never caught. My brothers and I are closer than ever. I learned that when you need Jesus, all you have to do is call Him, pray to Him and He will answer your prayer.

I do not look down on anyone who does not believe in Jesus, but I wonder, how do they make it in this world without faith in God, without knowing Him for themselves? I think about all the dangerous roads traveled before I got shot. I had no faith in God. I thought that God only loved white people.

I had abused drugs. I spent over \$10,000.00 on cocaine, but God blessed me and He cured me. I did not have to go into a drug rehab program. I did not have to go to see another doctor. God removed the desire and cleansed me. God healed me over 22 years ago. Even when I did not believe in prayer, God healed me.

I saw so much suffering in my family when I was younger. I saw suffering among friends. God never seemed to be for Black people. I know now that Satan put those thoughts in my head. I was not acquainted with every Black person in the world. *How could I possibly conclude that God hated all African Americans?* I know now that Satan planted that seed.

God is good all of the time. I know this now. God led me, and then He blessed me to go to College and then on to Graduate school where I earned a Master Degree in Psychology.

I have a husband that loves me and whom I love. I have a huge family through lineage, marriage and Christian adoption. I am blessed. God gave me my family back, with more love than ever. I have a good marriage and a good home. I have a good pastor and church family. Yes, God *is* Good. My soul is saved through my confession of faith in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection and through my Baptism.

God has watched over me all my life, even when I refused to pray, and when I think of God's Grace, My heart is filled with joy. I now know that God loves *all* people. God's Amazing Grace *can* bless all people. It is sad that our stubborn nature allowed me to hold on to hurt and not forgive. It was a painful learning experience for me and my family to learn to ask for forgiveness or forgiving someone else on a daily basis.

I praise God for teaching me how to forgive and let go. I praise God for reconciliation. I praise God for His grace and Mercy and His Life, Death and resurrection. Praise God for the Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost.

Don't hold on to anger. You never know what the future holds. Don't miss out on an opportunity to ask for forgiveness or to accept forgiveness and to forgive. God forgives us. Let us forgive **EVERYONE!**