



Spirit of Grace

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December, 2009

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Highly Favored One

Catholics have elevated Mary to such a level that Protestants sometimes seem almost afraid to say too much about her. This is a shame, because she is one of the most sterling characters we find in the Scriptures. She was not perfect, but she was one pretty amazing lady.

We know this because the Scriptures reveal to us God's opinion of her. We find this in Gabriel's words to her at the time he came to tell her she would be the mother of the Messiah. His first words were, "Rejoice, **highly favored one...**" When he saw Mary's fear, he reassured her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for **you have found favor with God...**"

We are not told any of the details. How is it Mary found such favor? What was it about her? Was it her personality? Her reverence for God? Her way of speaking? The way she treated others? It was probably all of the above, and more. In the estimation of Bible scholars, Mary was probably a teen-ager at this time. From an American perspective, she would not have been considered cool. Had she lived in our day she would not have been voted the most popular girl in her school, or

been seen at all the parties the cool kids attended. She was far too serious about God for that.

We can see something of Mary's relationship with God by her reaction to the Holy Spirit's filling when she went to see her pregnant cousin Elizabeth. After Elizabeth declares: "Blessed is she who believed" Mary, under the Spirit's inspiration, breaks out into a prophetic song. Known as *Mary's Magnificat*, in this amazing utterance she is continually quoting from the Scriptures, especially from Psalms, Isaiah, and 1 Samuel. If you have a chain reference Bible you will find one verse after another linked to this short prophetic song. This young lady knew the Word!

I get the impression Mary was more of a thinker than a talker. When the shepherds came to the stable and shared what the angels had told them, Luke tells us that all who heard this mar-



veled, but Mary did something further: "But Mary kept all these things *and pondered them in her heart.*" Mary thought long and hard about the things of God and this unique Son who had come from her womb. Sometimes I think the reason so much of our modern preaching is so shallow is that too few take the time to ponder the truths of God's word. As a result we focus more upon God's benefits than His majesty.

God found the woman He would use to bring forth His Son in the most unlikely of places – a small Jewish village called Nazareth. Here she grew up, learned the Scriptures, met her husband-to-be, and somehow lived such a life that she found favor with the Almighty. Nazareth is estimated to have had a population of between 200 – 400 inhabitants in Jesus' time. It was far from Jerusalem and Judea, the center of Jewish culture and religion. God overlooked the daughters of the Jewish aristocracy and chose a quiet, thoughtful village girl that would have been disregarded by all the important movers and shakers in Israel. As Hanani, the prophet, declared: "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of *those* whose heart *is* loyal to Him." God's eyes had alighted upon Mary, and He liked what He saw.

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Thanks for 2009!

Thanks so much for your support of SOGM in 2009. Despite a faltering economy, we were able to carry on with the vital work of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world and teaching church leaders the fundamentals of the return of Jesus and the principles of evangelism. We appreciate you!



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As godly as Mary was, she was still a sinner in need of a Savior, and that Savior turned out to be her firstborn son. It must have been a lot to take in, as she began to realize that the little boy she nursed and diapered was in fact the Creator and Savior of the world. At some point she stopped calling Him son and started calling Him Lord. Her heart was pierced as she saw her son crucified, but how she must have rejoiced when she saw Him resurrected and glorified! And when the disciples were gathered in the upper room, praying and waiting for the Holy Spirit's power, Mary was among them. Like everyone else, she too needed the power of the Holy Spirit to share the good news of Jesus.



Mary will always be a testimony to us that spending time with God is not a waste. While the church often looks for methods to reach the world, God looks for men and women. He looks for those whose roots grow deep in the soil of His Word and His presence, and who will dare to believe that with God nothing is impossible. Captured by the gospel of Jesus Christ and steeped in the Word of God they will emerge from their own "Nazareths" and make Jesus known to the world. The pattern never changes.

Would you pray for us?

Any and every ministry needs prayer for success. And those ministries that would invade the devil's lair, and go into areas where Christianity is not particularly welcome are in special need of prayer. Would you commit to pray for us in 2010? We are enlisting prayer warriors to support SOGM in the coming year.

All we need is your email address and your willingness to pray over the needs we present to you. We will keep you informed of the overseas missions that we do, providing you with the specific dates of the campaigns so that you can be informed as you seek the throne of God on behalf of the ministry. **Prayer strikes the winning blow; service is gathering up the results.** Send us your email today (dpollock@sogmin.org) and let us know you will join our prayer team!

