

GRACE TO YOU

GRACE TO YOU

Sept. 15, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: As we have received God's grace, let us offer grace to those around us.

Scriptures: 1 Pet. 4:7-10; Matt. 18:21-35; Matt. 10:8b

1 Pet. 4:7-10 NASB The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer. ⁸ Above all, **keep fervent in your love for one another**, because love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ **Be hospitable to one another** without complaint. ¹⁰ **As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.**

.....

Matt. 18:21-35 NASB Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, **"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ "When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ "But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ "So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' ²⁷ "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, 'Pay back**

what you owe.’²⁹ “So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’³⁰ “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.³¹ “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.³² “Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.³³ ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’³⁴ “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.³⁵ “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

.....

A man borrowed millions of dollars from his king, and when the time came to repay, he had nothing. He knew the consequences of this failure – jail, slavery and torture. He begged for time, although this was utterly useless in light of the enormous sum involved. Then totally without expectation, and without even being asked, the king simply wrote off the debt and let the man go free!

As he ran from the king’s presence with his heart bursting with joy, he saw a colleague who owed him a couple hundred dollars. Immediately his celebration ceased and he demanded payment from his friend. The debtor asked for just a little more time, a totally reasonable request in light of the small amount owing, but the man would not hear of it. He had his colleague thrown in jail and went his way feeling totally justified!

Sound ridiculous? That is exactly how it’s supposed to sound, because it is ridiculous! When Jesus told this

parable in Matthew 18, He was teaching a lesson about the way we need to respond to the grace that has been shown to us: we need to extend grace to those around us!

“... freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8b KJV).

As we look at the relationships between children and their parents, grandparents and great grandparents, we gain crucial understandings about how grace works:

- Love is the foundation of grace.
- We assume that love and grace will be extended between family members.
- Grace does not have to be earned. It is freely given.
- We are happy to extend grace to our family members.
- There is no expectation of reward for extending grace.

We even see great grace extended toward individuals in the public sphere that is quite amazing! (Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King Jr.) The truth is, unless you are God, you need grace.

The awesome truth of God’s grace toward us, (in the person of Jesus Christ), is that *He* was willing to pay for *our* wrongdoing!

Sin had a price tag attached to it. Jesus paid the price to redeem us from sin. He took the pain, the shame and the rejection on our behalf. His *grace* was extended to us.

What a powerful concept! Are we willing to graciously pay the price and accept the shame for our brother or sister’s wrongdoing?

As we interact with each other, here are some things we must remember, (which will help us to keep extending grace to each other):

- God does not demand perfection before He accepts us. Through grace, He gives us His own perfection.
- In the church, we need to act as we would in an inter-generational family. We must readily accept the fact that we live in different 'worlds' and expect differences.
- We must love those who are different from us and celebrate and accommodate our differences.
- In the church, we need to ask: "Is my brother's action righteous, sinful, of no moral consequence, or just different"? If it is sinful, we must "speak the truth in love" and try to correct them. We cannot stab them in the back and try to destroy them.

Examples: Jesus and the adulterous woman; Jesus and Judas; Jesus and Peter.

We often find such inconsequential reasons to be ungracious with each other! Instead of using these opportunities to ask questions, foster understanding, learn new ways, reexamine traditions and build bridges to those who see things differently, we find it much easier to be ungracious.

But these situations can be crucial for our own personal growth and spiritual health. We may be forced to say: "I need to change my thinking on this topic",

or:

"I will definitely continue on the path I am walking, even though it is so different from the way others choose to walk".

Examples:

- Differences in worship practices: music, praise dancing, head coverings
- Personal presentation: natural or un-natural, (permed or natural hair, braids, extensions, wigs, dye, facial hair on men), modesty, adornment, personality traits
- Social interactions: social media, celebratory practices, dating
- Entertainment: (music, movies, concerts, sporting events, television)
- Political activity
- Social activism
- Outreach / evangelism

Often, people use these opportunities to question and opine about the spiritual standing or salvation status of a brother or sister. Can we not rather look for evidence of the awesome, life changing, gracious activity of God in each other's lives?

In every situation we need to ask the question: "Is there an opportunity for me to show grace to my brother, my sister."

At the same time, we understand that **the extension of grace is *never* meant to give the recipient license to sin!**

Let us accept the grace of God that has been graciously offered to us, and let us dispense it to others in the proportion to which we have received it.

APPENDIX:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExfG9K-Scto>