

The Wednesday Word, July 1, 2015: Abounding Grace - Part 2

Believers have received past grace. We live in present grace and will receive future grace. Grace truly is abounding. However, there's a bad teaching going around that says; "Because of grace, I must do everything I can to pay God back." Grrrr! That's so wrong! When we receive a gift, we do not expect to be charged for it. It is a gift. Do we now believe that God gives us His grace, but now He must be repaid? This kind of thinking militates against the gospel. Grace does not plunge us into debt. It liberates us!

The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death, but the GIFT of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Just as there's nothing we can do to earn the gift, there's nothing we can do to repay it. A gift is a gift is a gift!

There's a designated word for trying to pay back God for His gift; it's called legalism.

Where did we get this faulty idea that we must repay God? Perhaps, it sometimes comes from faulty choruses and hymns. Now, don't misunderstand me, I love the old hymns. But when we talk about the "great old hymns" some of them were not so great. Consider, for example, "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." I love that Hymn, but we don't sing it in our meetings for two reasons. First of all it talks about 'raising our Ebenezer'....I got tired of having to explain what that meant. The second and more serious reason is that one of the verses says "O to grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be."

But wait a minute! A debtor is someone who owes someone and is obligated to pay them back. Do you ever feel constrained to pay God back for His grace? If you do, you have been plundered by another grace robber! We are not debtors to grace.

Why does God give us grace? The simple answer is, He gives it because He wants to give it (Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:9).

Dr David Dykes of Tyler, Texas, in his series on Colossians, tells a famous story which comes from the book, 'To End all Wars,' by Ernest Gordon. He tells about a group of Allied POWs in World War II who were being forced by the Japanese to build the Burma Railway. The day's work had ended; the tools were being counted, as usual. As the party was about to be dismissed, the Japanese guard shouted that a shovel was missing. He insisted that someone had stolen it to sell to the Thais. Striding up and down before the men, he ranted and denounced them for their wickedness, and most unforgivable of all their ingratitude to the Emperor. As he raved, he worked himself up into a paranoid fury. Screaming in broken English, he demanded that the guilty one step forward to take his punishment. No one moved; the guard's rage reached new heights of violence. "All die! All die!" he shrieked. To show that he meant what he said, he cocked his rifle, put it to his shoulder and looked down the sights, ready to fire a the first man in the line. At that moment the Argyll (Highlander) stepped forward, stood stiffly to attention, and said calmly, "I did it." The guard unleashed all this whipped-up hate; he kicked the helpless prisoner and beat him with his fists. Still the Argyll stood rigidly at attention, with the blood streaming down his face. His silence goaded the guard to an excessive rage. Seizing his rifle by the barrel, he lifted it high over his head and with a final howl, brought it down on the skull of the Argyll, who sank limply to the ground and did not move. Although it was perfectly clear he was dead, the guard continued to beat him and stopped only when exhausted. The men of the detail picked up their comrade's body, shouldered their tools and marched back to camp. When the tools were counted again at the guard house, no shovel was missing. This brave soldier had obviously given his life for his friends. He took a punishment he didn't deserve so that his fellow soldiers could live.

Let's never forget that Jesus went to the cross and was punished so that we wouldn't be. That's grace! However, He doesn't ask us to do anything to repay His grace...that's grace abounding.

So I'll say it again, God doesn't say to us, I'll give you my grace, but in return you have to do something for me." God gives us His grace because He freely wants to. It is unearned on our part. Otherwise, it would not be grace. Do we now do something back for God? Yes indeed, we will be His thankful followers, friends and fellow workers...not because we are in debt to Him but because he has removed our debt by His Abounding Grace.

And that's the Gospel Truth!