

The Wednesday Word, Dec. 31, 2013: Misunderstood Matters About Grace, Part 1

The meaning of grace is quite often misunderstood. It is sometimes presented as a soft spot for sinners in the heart of God, or as some kind of benevolence on behalf of the Almighty that disregards the sin question. This is entirely incorrect! As we have already seen, grace, Bible grace, loving grace, is righteous grace. Saving grace never bypasses the cross!

Because of the cross we learn that God saves, not because He has an easy-going inbuilt compassion, but saves, rather, by having dealt ruthlessly with our sins when He laid them on Christ. Yes indeed, we are saved by grace, but it is righteous grace for it comes from the God who refused to ignore the awfulness of our sin. Our sin was not swept under the carpet; rather, God publicly placarded His Son and set Him forth as a wrath offering for sin on our behalf (Romans 3:25-26). Grace is, therefore, both free and costly; it's free to us, but it has been so very costly to Him!

Another misunderstood thing about grace is that we often feel as though we have to seek it. God's grace, however, does not wait for us to seek it out, but rather it comes seeking us. Jesus made this clear when He declared that He had come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). So wonderful and excellent is His grace that He sought us out before we even knew we were lost! This is why we sing of His grace as being 'Amazing'. We were really and truly lost, but He really and truly came looking for us and found us!

Even now, after being saved for many years, grace continues to come and seek us out. We still have tendencies to stray and wander off. As the Hymn writer said,

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it
Prone to leave the God I love,
Take my heart Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it for thy courts above.

I once heard about an old deacon who always prayed, "Lord, prop us up on our leanin' side..." Someone asked him why he prayed that prayer so frequently and fervently. He answered, 'Well sir, you see, it's like this... I got an old barn out back. It's been there a long time, it's withstood a lot of weather, it's gone through a lot of storms, and it's stood for many years. It's still standing. But one day I noticed it was leaning to one side a bit. So I went and got some pine poles and propped it up on its leaning side so it wouldn't fall. Then I got to thinking about that and how much I was like that old barn. Sometimes I find myself leaning to one side from time to time, so I like to ask the Lord to prop us up on our leaning side, 'cause I figure a lot of us get to leaning, at times.'

I like that, but do know what? I'm worse than that for, at times, I find myself, not just leaning over on one side, but leaning over on every side and ready to collapse. Have you ever been that way? If you have, here's the good news ... grace does not wait for us to cry out for help; grace is already there seeking to restore and strengthen us before we ever begin leaning. Grace goes to work and brings us back to our merciful High priest whose throne is a throne of grace and who delights to give us grace to help in the time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

And that's the Gospel Truth!