

The Wednesday Word, October 8, 2025: Abounding Grace - Part 2

The Bible says, “The wages of sin is death, but the GIFT of God is eternal life through 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 some faulty choruses and hymns that we sing. Now, don’t misunderstand me, I love many of the old hymns. But when we talk about the “great old hymns” some of their verses were not so great.

Consider, for example, “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing.” I love that hymn, but I stopped singing it for two reasons. First of all, it talks about ‘raising our Ebenezer’....I got tired of having to explain what Ebenezer 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 something to 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 legalism! We are not debtors to grace. Grace doesn’t put us into debt! It pays our debt! We have been liberated by grace.

Why does God give us grace? The simple answer is, He gives grace because He wants to. Listen to this, “*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*, (Ephesians 1:5).

There’s a famous story which comes from the book, ‘To End all Wars,’ by Ernest Gordon. It 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 work 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 locals. 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 at the first man in the line.

At that moment, an 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.

In one sense the remaining soldiers were in debt to the one who had given his life for them.

It's a true story. But here's another even greater one. Jesus, the man who was and is God went to the cross and was punished so that we wouldn't be. And that's grace! He doesn't ask us to do anything to repay the gift of salvation because a gift is a gift is a gift is a gift.

And that's the Gospel Truth!

Excerpted from "The Gospel Truth about Living in Grace," By D.G. Miles McKee