

## God's Grace: Spreading Grace, Peace, and Truth

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) Jesus came from the Father full of grace and truth.*

In Jesus Christ, grace and truth are joined. Jesus showed us that apart from grace, we cannot really speak the truth, and apart from the truth, we are not really speaking words of grace. The peace of God comes when grace and truth are joined, and in Jesus, we see our perfect example.

*"From his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given" (John 1:16). What does John mean when he says, "grace in place of grace already given?"*

-*"Grace already given"* is in reference to the law of Moses (Ten Commandments and all the specific laws that came from them). There was grace in the law.

-*"Grace in place of"* refers to Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

-God's grace seen in His Son is great than the grace found in the law, and this grace is as C. S. Lewis says is "farther up and farther in" or multi-layered.

The religiously closed mind is only interested in exporting its brand of spirituality. We need to discover that it's impossible to drink in God's grace if we do nothing but tell others how to live—if we emphasize truth over grace. (John 8:1-11)

We avoid the trap of overemphasizing truth over grace by humbling ourselves as James 4:6 reminds us. *When we humble ourselves, we position ourselves for greater grace. And when we humble ourselves, we create an atmosphere of peace that allows us to speak the truth, filled with grace.*

### Receiving Grace and Peace

Paul opened each one of his letters with "Grace and peace to you." *Paul understood our ongoing need for both.* He wished for grace and peace in abundance.

Paul gave each congregation grace and peace because they were his to give.

-In Luke 10. Jesus instructed the original twelve, *Whatever house you enter, let your first words be, 'peace to this house.* Jesus knew that a greeting of peace could rest upon the people in that house or return to the one that gave the greeting.

-This peace Jesus instructed the disciples to give was something real, something tangible.

Paul wrote to encourage what was good in these churches and to offer correction where it was needed. How often do we look upon correction and teaching (truth) as sources of the peace and grace of God? God's grace and peace should be prized above almost anything else in our lives. So, if correction and teaching (truth) bring grace and peace, why would we fight them? Why do we fight reproof even when we know we needed to hear it? All of these churches needed grace and peace.

Those Christians who first heard these letters of Paul had a choice: They could listen beyond the mere words of the letter, and in so doing receive the grace and peace offered them. Or, like the householder in Luke 10, they could refuse to receive the grace of God and the peace of God as it appeared to them.

How often does God's grace or peace appear to us in some form we may not recognize? We should ask ourselves: Do we receive the words of loved ones as God's grace in our lives? Do we ever consider that the instruction we receive from those in authority in the church has the potential to bring God's peace?

## **Giving Grace and Peace**

Paul's greetings were examples of what we can give. Have we received some measure of grace? Of peace? Jesus gave straightforward instructions to his followers in Matthew 10:8, *Freely you've received, therefore freely give*. Have we ever quoted Scripture or prayed Scripture on behalf of others?

If God has given you peace in any area of your life, you can give that peace, as well.

It's important to share with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ what He has done for you!

## **Obstacles to Grace**

Yet there are obstacles to grace. Even more startling, we ourselves are sometimes the opponents to grace. To bring grace and peace, we should examine ourselves in two areas.

### ***Bitterness***

Hebrews 12:15 - *See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled. Bitterness is an obstacle to grace.*

This passage from Hebrews warns us that, apart from the grace of God, our bitterness, and unsettled scores seep into those around us. My bitterness can defile others.

### ***Scarcity***

Scarcity is my fear that grace is a zero-sum game, that somehow grace comes prepackaged in fixed amounts. I think whatever grace I find; I must keep for myself. Who knows where I'll find more? Part of the good news is that there is more grace, grace for today and grace for tomorrow.

## **Community of Grace**

Finally, we should understand that there is a place to cultivate grace, peace, and truth, and that place is the church. God who adopted us into his family intends that we should live together as family. For many Christians, the church of Jesus is largely out of joint. How can we grow in grace when we are free to wander from one family to another?

*But it doesn't have to be like this.*

1 Peter 4:8-11 - Our words and actions are the practical expressions of God's grace. God wants to show his grace through the love, hospitality, encouragement, and service in the community of faith. We extend grace to others precisely because we've received grace from God.

Not only does grace grow in the community we call church, it grows in the most unlikely places of the church, among our shortcomings, our hypocrisies, and our failings.

Peter calls us to use our gifts in service toward one another. We steward the grace we have received by the way we speak and act toward others in the church.

Stewarding grace - Parable of the Talents - The master leaves something of great worth with his servants (substitute grace for gold), and when he returns, he looks to see whether we have used his gift wisely.

When we distribute the grace of God, we will receive his praise, and something more, an invitation to enter into his joy. Through grace, joy increases for everyone.