

## “U Asked for It:Grace” [4. 22. 07]

### “Blue Lights”

- Most of us who have been driving a car for a significant time have known the exhilaration that accompanies the sight of ‘**flashing blue lights,**’ in rear view mirror.
  - If this has ever happened to you; you instantly know what it is like to be filled with deep regret. Your ♥ rate triples in a matter of seconds ☺
  - You know the **overpowering temptation** to [say things] you ought not to say in the presence of small children & your grandmother ☺
- Let me add, if you have never known the exhilaration that I am talking about, you *ought to speed once in the presence* of a law enforcement officer.
  - It’s one of those **life experiences** that make [life worth living]. It lets you know that *you are alive* when you see those lights flashing in the mirror.
- As you pull off the road & watch the officer get out of his car & make that eternal walk from his patrol car to yours; what you long for is **JUSTICE**.
  - You long for the officer to say; Sir or Miss you were speeding & I will need to write you a ticket today.
  - Oh, you want JUSTICE, right? Wrong, **no one wants justice!**
- No, as the officer is walking; what you are hoping & even praying for is that the officer is having the best day he’s had in a long time. Hoping that he has a soft spot for a person who manifest crocodile tears; this is your strategy!
- You sit patiently & long to hear him say, ‘Today, I have decided to just give you a \_\_\_\_\_.’ **You have been there, I can see.**
- I’m going to give you a warning; this is called **MERCY**.
  - If you have ever received MERCY in such a situation, you know the sense of relief and deep gratitude that accompanies such an action.
  - It’s indeed exhilarating; **@ least this is what Keith Comp once told me** ☺
- **Now imagine**, just for a moment a different scenario;
  - The officer walks up to your car and says, ‘Hi, what’s your name?’ He says, ‘...well Tim I did not stop you today to give you a speeding ticket [even though] you were speeding & [even though] you did not stop @ the last stop sign.’
- Not only have I not stopped you to give you a ticket but I am not even going to give you an official warning.
  - No Tim, I stopped you today because **I wanted to buy you lunch.**
  - **Here’s \$10.00; have lunch on me** – buy the way it might be a good idea to slow down, have a nice day.

Has this ever happened to anyone? If it had; you would have been the recipient of a form of grace – a form of **AMAZING GRACE!**

Not just mercy but GRACE;  
Getting something you did not deserve or earn as a result of someone else’s favor!

As I care to listen to scripture; I hear a loud whisper from the gospel that I did not get what **I deserved**:

- I deserved punishment and [got forgiveness]!
- I deserved wrath but instead [got unconditional love]!
- I deserved debtor's prison and yet [received a clean credit history]!

Let's see how the Bible describes GRACE:

I. (R) Ephesians 2: 1 – 3 or p. 895 in pew Bible

A. v. 3 indicates COMMONALITY among all of us gathered...

- We are just a group sinners huddled around the Cross of Jesus!
- **[Healthy discipline]** I need to regularly engage in self-examination & confession. I need to be reminded that **Jesus died in my place** to forgive me of my sins!
- When I am intensely aware of my own fallen ness, it's a lot harder to be judgmental. When I am aware of my need for GRACE; **I'm much more gracious!**
- **It's like**, when I'm dieting I can be judgmental of what others are eating; when I'm not dieting it is much harder to judge!

B. (R) Luke 7 or p. 787 in pew Bible **[Healthy attitude to adopt]**

- (R) vv 1 – 3
- (R) vv 4 – 5 [emphasis placed upon deserving]
  - The centurion was a remarkable man. He was an officer in the Roman occupation army; yet he served the Jewish nation by building them a synagogue. **Think about** an enemy officer doing such a thing!
  - But the centurion's attitude about himself is even more remarkable than his deeds. Instead of thinking of what he should receive because of what he deserves, he freely confessed, **'he didn't deserve anything'**!
- (R) vv 6 – 7
  - This humble attitude allowed him not only to experience the joy of having his request granted but also the added joy of knowing he had received **what he did not deserve!**

**[Back to the text]** listen carefully to Paul's description of what God has done for you in ...

II. (R) Ephesians 2: 4 – 7 [pay attention to the details]

A. As you listened to the text, did you notice...?

- Who is doing the work? **You or GOD?**
- Who is actively pursuing? **You or GOD?**
- Who is doing the saving? **You or GOD?**

GRACE teaches us, that God loves because of who God is; Not because of who we are.

## B. Self – Esteem

- [Sociologists explain] that our self-image @ the end of the day is largely dependent upon what kind of messages you have received from other people. Am I liked? Am I loved? We receive these answers from friends – our neighbors – family members; that **possibly validate** our personal value.
- I'm finally beginning to understand the truth about GRACE; **the parables are actually about ME!**
  - I am the sheep that shepherd has left the flock to find;
  - I am the prodigal for whom the Father scans the horizon each day;
  - I am the servant whose debt has been forgiven; **I am the beloved of God!**
- What is your identity based upon?
  - GRACE means I am the one Jesus loves!
  - What would it mean if I came to the place where I saw my primary identity in life as “the one Jesus loves.”
    - How differently would I view myself @ the end of the day?

## C. Theory of the Looking – Glass self; sociologists explain...

- You become what the most important person in your life [wife – father – boss – money – coach – etc.] thinks you are. How would my life change if I truly believed the Bible's astounding words about God's love for me, if I looked in the mirror & **see what God sees?**
- **[Brennan Manning]** tells the story of an Irish priest who on a walking tour of a rural parish sees an old peasant kneeling by the side of the road – praying.
  - Impressed, the priest says to the man, “...*you must be very close to God.*”
  - The peasant looks up from his prayers; thinks for a moment & then smiles, “**Yes, He's very fond of me!**”

## D. So, how do we develop this kind of relationship with God?

- **[Back to the text]** = (Q) Ephesians 2: 5b
  - “...*it is only by God's grace that you have been saved.*”
- We receive the GRACE of God by faith alone!
- Let's not NEGLECT that Faith has (2) parts
  1. **{1st part} Intellectual Assent** = a well founded belief that Jesus is God's son, & that He willingly died to release us from the penalty of death. *We simply believe that this is true.*

**Hebrews 11: 6** confirms,

*“...it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to Him must believe that God exists & that He rewards those who sincerely seek Him.”*

2. **{2nd part} TRUST** = it has do with *surrendering*; much more than just intellectually agreeing with a given statement of belief; it is **a decision to surrender to a person!**

*II Timothy 1: 12 asserts,*

*"...that is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it; for I know the ONE in whom I trust, and I am sure that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until the day of His return."*

- (2) Things about TRUST:
  1. **You surrender to a person;**  
you do not give yourself to some ideology...but you give yourself to Jesus!
- Jesus is the only means of salvation; His own blood redeemed us!
- 2. **You surrender your will** through...
- Confession of your sins & taking that 1st step of a repenting sinner, being Baptized; marking a new beginning for your life!
  - **Public statement** declares, God have your will done in my life today; I give you full control of my destiny.

Of all the religions of the world;  
Only Christianity **dares to make** God's love unconditional!

Paul announces that God has provided a way;  
Salvation comes from heaven downward - - - not earth upward!

III. (R) Ephesians 2: 8 – 10

**A. Salvation is...**

- God – given; God – driven
- God – empowered; & God – originated

**GRACE** is created by God and given to humankind

- When I ask for forgiveness of my sins & accept Jesus as Lord;  
**GOD does the rest!**

B. I will close with a story...

There once was a very wealthy man who had (2) passions in his life; 1st was his art collection of the great master artist & 2nd was his son. The son quickly knew that if he were to ever make a connection w/his dad had to learn about the great art masters. He studied the great painters of history & their masterpieces; the father actually taught him to tell the difference between a work of a Master & a forged copy.

A war broke out; & the son was called off to war. After several months of separation, the father received word that his young son had been killed in combat saving the life of one of the men in his unit. **Devastated by the news**, the wealthy man became a recluse within his own home. He just spent time grieving the loss of his boy.

Several months later the older man had a visitor arrive one afternoon. It was the young man his son had saved in combat; at the cost of his own life. "Sir," the young man said, "your son often talked about your art collection & the love you both had for it. I am amateur painter I painted this portrait of your son while I was healing of my wounds in the hospital. This is all I have to give you for your son saving my life; **please accept it!**"

The father took the painting and hung it in the most honored place above the mantel above the fireplace. When the wealthy man died; his entire art collection went up for auction. Art dealers from around the world gathered for a chance his **vast collection**.

Anticipation built; where would the bidding begin; which great artist would start the proceedings. 1st painting that was auctioned was the portrait of the wealthy man's son. Auctioneer started the bidding at \$5,000.00. **Audience began laughing @** the price; NO bids, it went to \$4,500.00 and then to \$4,000.00. Again jeers grew louder.

Back row an older man stood up, **is there a minimum bid**; NO said the auctioneer; the gentleman said, I knew this young man and his father was always very kind to me. I would like to bid \$35.00 for the painting, no wait \$39.00 for it, it's all I've got w/me!

Auction continued; Do I hear, \$3k, Do I hear \$2k, Do I hear \$1,500; crowd was restless & demanded the auction to be moved on to the great masters. They were not interested in this amateur painting. Older man **took his \$39.00 & bought** the painting.

When the older man came forward to pay & take his painting back to his seat, a hush fell over the gallery in silence. With that the auctioneer folded up his portfolio and said, "this concludes the auction." Stunned the people started protesting the auctioneer's statement. What about the important paintings the Masters and the other works of art? We have traveled from all the world to bid on the collection.

With that the auctioneer turned to the astonished crowd and said, "it was written in the wealthy man's **Last Will & Testament** that, whoever accepts my son takes it all!"

God said that...Whoever accepts my son Jesus; **takes it all!**