

TITLE: "GRASPING GOD'S GRACE"

(GRACE)

TEXT: EPH. 2:1-10

02/02/25

FILE: (GRACE1)

INTRO.

1. ONE OF THE MANY MOVIES THAT HAS BECOME A STAPLE ON T.V. DURING THE XMAS SEASON IS NATIONAL LAMPOON'S CHRISTMAS VACATION (1989)(NOT A RECOM-MENDATION .. JUST A REFERENCE).
2. IT'S ABOUT A MAN NAMED CLARK GRISWOLD WHO WANTS TO GIVE HIS FAMILY THE PERFECT "GRISWOLD FAMILY XMAS" ... BUT SOMEHOW EVERYTHING KEEPS GOING WRONG.
3. ONE OF THE FAN FAVORITE SCENES IS XMAS DINNER.
 - A. CLARK ASKS HIS ELDERLY & ALMOST-DEAF AUNT BETHANY - THE OLDEST MEM-BER OF THE FAMILY - TO "SAY GRACE."
 - B. SHE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND - SO UNCLE LOUIS - SEATED NEXT TO HER SAYS VERY LOUDLY: "GRACE. THEY WANT YOU TO SAY GRACE!"
 - C. AUNT BETHANY THEN SAYS: "GRACE? SHE'S BEEN DEAD 30 YEARS!"
 - D. UNCLE LOUIS TRIES TO CLARIFY: "THE *BLESSING*. THEY WANT YOU TO SAY THE BLESSING."
 - E. SHE SAYS: "OH" - AND FOLDS HER HANDS .. BOWS HER HEAD .. & BEGINS: "I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA..."

- F. AND THE WHOLE FAMILY ENDS UP STANDING & RECITING THE PLEDGE OF AL-LEGIANCE.
4. WELL - THERE'S CERTAINLY A LOT OF CONFUSION ABOUT WHAT "GRACE" REALLY IS.
- A. IT WAS ONE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S FAVORITE WORDS - & IT'S A COMMON TERM IN XIAN CIRCLES & A POPULAR THEME OF XIAN SONGS – BUT DO WE REALLY KNOW WHAT IT IS - & WHAT IT MEANS.
 - B. I'M NOT JUST TALKING ABOUT THE MEANING OF THE WORD ITSELF.
 - C. RATHER - I'M TALKING ABOUT GRASPING THE *CONCEPT* OF GRACE & THE REAL-ITY OF IT IN OUR OWN LIVES.
 - D. OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WE'LL BE EXPLORING THIS IMPORTANT BIBLICAL THEME ...
 - E. ... NOT ONLY BY DEFINING THE TERM - BUT EVEN MORE - BY LOOKING AT EXAM-PLS OF GRACE AS EXPERIENCED BY NUMEROUS PEOPLE IN SCRIPTURE - SOME FROM THE O.T. AND SOME FROM THE N.T.
 - F. MANY OF THEIR STORIES DON'T EVEN USE THE WORD "GRACE" IN THE TELLING OF THE STORY - BUT THE *IDEA* OF GRACE PERMEATES ALL OF THEM.
5. BUT FIRST - LET'S TRY TO GET OUR MIND AROUND THE CONCEPT OF GRACE SO THAT WHEN WE ENCOUNTER IT - WE'LL RECOGNIZE IT MORE READILY - & WE'LL LEARN TO CHERISH IT FOR THE PRECIOUS GIFT THAT IT REALLY IS.

DISCUSSION:

I. LET'S START WITH A DEFINITION. WHAT IS GRACE?

- A. I LOOKED AT AN ONLINE DICTIONARY AND FOUND NO FEWER THAN 20 DIFFER-ENT WAYS THE WORD “GRACE” IS USED IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.
1. IT’S EVERYTHING FROM A PRAYER SAID BEFORE MEALS TO A “GRACE PER-IOD” ON AN INSURANCE POLICY OR THE PAYING OF A BILL.
 2. WE ALSO REFER TO “GRACING” SOMEONE WITH OUR PRESENCE ... AND WE USE IT IN CONNECTION WITH A WOMAN’S NAME IN A TITLE OF NOBIL-ITY - AS IN “YOUR GRACE.”
- B. BUT THE BIBLICAL WORD *CHARIS* (*Kah-reece*) SIMPLY MEANS A “GIFT” - “SOMETHING RECEIVED W/OUT BEING EARNED.”
1. WHEN IT’S APPLIED TO GOD - THAT’S EXACTLY WHAT GRACE IS - GOD EX-TENDING HIS DIVINE MERCY .. FAVOR .. & FORGIVENESS WHEN WE ACT-UALLY *DESERVE* HIS CONDEMNATION.
 2. BTW - IN THESE DISCUSSIONS WE’LL OFTEN REFER TO THE WORDS: “DESERVE” AND “DO NOT DESERVE” TO MAKE THE MATTER EVEN CLEARER.
- C. ONE OF THE VERY BEST DEFINITIONS I EVER HEARD WAS FROM A LITTLE BOY WHO SAID: “GRACE IS GETTING WHAT YOU *NEED* INSTEAD OF WHAT YOU *DESERVE*.”
- D. THAT’S WHAT PAUL WAS TALKING ABOUT WHEN HE WROTE THAT “ALL HAVE

SINNED AND FALLEN SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD” - ROM. 3:23.

1. AND B/C OF THAT - HE SAYS - “THEREFORE WE ARE JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE AS A GIFT.”
 2. THAT’S EXACTLY THE *OPPOSITE OF WHAT WE DESERVE* -BUT WHAT WE NEED.
- E. IN EPH. 2 - PAUL EMPHASIZES THE UNDESERVED NATURE OF GRACE BY SAYING: “THIS IS *NOT YOUR OWN DOING ...* IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.”
- F. ALL OF THIS IS MADE POSSIBLE BY JESUS’ DEATH ON THE CROSS - JN. 1:14 - “AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELLED AMONG US ... & WE BEHELD HIS GLORY ... GLORY AS THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER ... FULL OF GRACE & TRUTH.”
1. GET THAT ... *NOT* B/C OF OUR WORKS ... NOT EVEN THE WORKS OF GOD’S OWN LAW - BUT B/C OF JESUS ... B/C HE BORE THE PENALTY OF OUR SINS ON THE CROSS FOR US.
 2. HE PAID THE PENALTY - THE “FINE” AS IT WERE - FOR OUR SINS SO THAT WHEN THE BILL IS PRESENTED TO THE HOLY FATHER ON THE DAY OF JUDG-MENT ... IT WILL HAVE STAMPED ACROSS THE FIRST PAGE: “PAID IN FULL.”
- G. BUT IF SALVATION WAS BY WORKS - IF WE COULD SOMEHOW EARN IT - THEN JESUS’ DEATH WOULD HAVE BEEN UNNECESSARY AND MEANINGLESS.
1. GAL. 2:21 SO AFFIRMS: “IF RIGHTEOUSNESS WERE THROUGH THE LAW - THEN CHRIST DIED TO NO PURPOSE (IN VAIN - NKJV).”

II. GRACE IS A WONDERFUL CONCEPT - & OUR ONLY HOPE - BUT WE SOMETIMES HAVE SUCH A HARD TIME GRASPING IT AND ACCEPTING IT – BUT WHY?

A. 1st - IT'S PERHAPS B/C OF OUR NATURAL TENDENCY TO EXPECT TO GET WHAT WE DESERVE.

1. WHAT WAS OUR CHILD'S FIRST WORDS? – WAS IT “DADDY” OR “MOMMY” OR - WAS IT - AS SOME PARENTS CLAIM — “THAT’S NOT FAIR!”

2. THE FAIRNESS OR UNFAIRNESS ISSUE GETS INGRAINED EARLY DOESN'T IT?

3. GETTING WHAT WE HAVE COMING IS OKAY IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT OUR TURN AT BAT OR OUR TAKE-HOME PAY.

4. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO GOD'S JUDGMENT - THE VERY *LAST* THING WE SHOULD WANT IS TO GET WHAT WE DESERVE!

5. THEN IT'S NOT ABOUT “FAIR” - IT'S ABOUT WHAT WE MOST DESPERATELY *NEED*.

6. IT'S LIKE GIVING SOMEONE WHO'S STARVING SOME FOOD TO EAT - THEY DIDN'T BUY IT W/ THEIR OWN MONEY .. BUT THEY HAVE TO HAVE IT .. IT'S NECESSARY TO SUSTAIN LIFE.

B. 2nd - *WE DON'T COMPREHEND THE DEPTH OF OUR OWN SINFULNESS.*

1. IF WE THINK OF “SIN” AS SIMPLY A FEW ISOLATED MISTAKES COMMITTED BY AN OTHERWISE DECENT PERSON - WE MAY NOT SENSE

THE NEED FOR GRACE AT ALL.

2. WE'LL TAKE THE "IT'S MY MESS. I'LL CLEAN IT UP" APPROACH.
 3. BUT EPH. 2:5 SAYS THAT W/OUT GRACE WE ARE "*DEAD IN OUR TRESPASS-ES*."
 4. & I REMIND YOU - THE DEAD CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO HELP THEMSELVES ... THEY'RE TOO FAR GONE FOR THAT.
 5. SO - SIN ISN'T JUST A "MINOR AILMENT" THAT WILL GO AWAY ON ITS OWN – OR THROUGH OUR FEEBLE EFFORTS.
 6. INSTEAD - IT'S A *DEADLY INFECTION* THAT PERMEATES OUR BEING & THAT ONLY GOD HIMSELF CAN ADDRESS AND CURE BY HIS GRACE.
 7. SIN IS - IN FACT - A VIOLATION OF GOD'S HOLINESS & AN OFFENSE AGAINST HIS NATURE.
 8. THAT'S WHY ROM. 1:18 SAYS THAT IT RESULTS IN HIS WRATH ... SIN *TICKS GOD OFF!*
 9. AND ONLY GOD'S GRACE CAN SAVE US FROM GOD'S WRATH.
- C. 3rd - *THE REVERSE CAN ALSO BE TRUE ... SOMETIMES IT'S B/C WE'RE SUPER-SENSI-TIVE ABOUT OUR OWN SIN & GUILT.*
1. WE KNOW JUST HOW SINFUL WE REALLY ARE .. SO IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE WHO KNOWS ALL ABOUT US COULD POSSIBLY EXTEND HIS GRACE TO US AND STILL LOVE US.

2. WE DON'T DESERVE THAT – BUT THAT'S WHY IT'S CALLED “GRACE!”
 3. GOD KNOWS FULLY JUST HOW SINFUL WE REALLY ARE - BUT HE LOVES US ANYWAY AND OFFERS WHAT WE NEED MOST BUT CAN'T POSSIBLY GET FOR OURSELVES.
- D. 4th - *MAYBE IT'S B/C WE HAVE AN UNBALANCED UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S VERY NATURE.*
1. WHAT DO I MEAN BY “UNBALANCED?”
 2. IT'S TRUE THAT GOD IS ENTIRELY HOLY .. & THAT HE DEMANDS RIGHTEOUS-NESS FROM US .. & HE CANNOT TOLERATE SIN.
 3. BUT THAT'S NOT THE WHOLE STORY ABOUT GOD!
 4. IT'S ALSO TRUE THAT HE LOVES US & ISN'T A *HARSH JUDGE* WHO JUST LOOKING TO CONDEMN US ...
 5. ... OR A REFEREE LOOKING FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO “THROW A FLAG” & EJECT US FROM THE GAME.
 6. WE DON'T WANT TO MAKE THE MISTAKE THAT MARTIN LUTHER SAID HE MADE: “I LOST TOUCH WITH CHRIST THE SAVIOR & COMFORTER & MADE HIM THE JAILOR AND HANGMAN OF MY POOR SOUL.”
 7. PAUL REMINDS US IN I TIM. 2:4 THAT “GOD *DESIRES ALL PEOPLE TO BE SAVED* AND TO COME TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.”

8. IT'S TRUE THAT HE JUDGES THOSE WHO *REJECT HIS GRACE* - BUT HIS DIVINE NATURE IS ... HE WANTS MORE THAN ANYTHING *TO SAVE US* ...AND I MEAN EVERY ONE OF US.
 9. OTHERWISE - WHY WOULD HE SEND HIS OWN SON TO REDEEM US?
- E. 5th - *MAYBE IT'S B/C WE TRANSFER OUR OWN EXPERIENCES W/ UNFORGIVING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS ONTO GOD.*
1. MAYBE YOU WERE BROUGHT UP AROUND PEOPLE WHO NEVER PRACTICED FORGIVENESS ... THE "I DON'T GET MAD ... I GET EVEN" MENTALITY.
 2. IF SO - IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE ANYONE EVER TRULY FORGIVES THE GUILTY - *EVEN GOD!*
 3. BUT I WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO NEVER PROJECT THE FACES OF THOSE PEOPLE ONTO GOD.
 4. OR MAYBE *YOU'RE THE UNFORGIVING PERSON* WHO LIKES TO HOLD GRUDGES ... & YOU JUST ASSUME THAT GOD IS LIKE YOU.
 5. HERE'S SOME REALLY GOOD NEWS ... GOD ISN'T LIKE US ... HE *WANTS TO FORGIVE!*
- F. 6th - *MAYBE WE'VE GOTTEN THE IDEA THAT GUILT IS THE REASON WE SERVE GOD - & IF WE LOST OUR GUILT MOTIVATION - WE WOULDN'T BE FAITHFUL ANYMORE.*
1. EXAMPLE: "I NEED TO DO (X) OR I'LL FEEL GUILTY" - OR B/C I ALREADY

FEEL GUILTY & NEED TO DO SOME GOOD STUFF IN ORDER TO CANCEL THAT OUT

2. NEWS FLASH: GUILT MOTIVATION WILL ONLY GO SO FAR IN GETTING YOU TO OBEY GOD ... WE CAN'T RUN SCARED OR GUILTY FOREVER!
3. IF THAT'S YOUR PRIMARY MOTIVATION - YOU'LL PROBABLY DO ONLY AS MUCH AS YOU THINK IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO AVOID THE GUILT & TO MAKE YOU *FEEL* FORGIVEN.
4. THAT'S THE REASON THERE ARE CHURCH MEMBERS WHO PRACTICE A "MINIMALIST XIANITY" - W/ MINIMUM WORSHIP TIME .. BIBLE STUDY .. PRAYER .. WORKS OF SERVICE .. AND SO ON.
5. BUT THERE'S A FAR MORE POWERFUL MOTIVATION FOR XIAN LIVING THAN THAT ... IT'S GOD'S GRACE ... & IT'S OUR GRATITUDE IN KNOWING THAT GOD HAS *ALREADY PARDONED US OF OUR SINS*.
6. LISTEN TO PAUL'S OWN ASSESSMENT OF THAT SPIRITUAL CONDITION - I COR. 15:9-10 ...

"FOR I AM THE LEAST OF THE APOSTLES - UNWORTHY TO BE CALLED AN APOSTLE - B/C I PERSECUTED THE CHURCH OF GOD. BUT BY *THE GRACE OF GOD* I AM WHAT I AM - & HIS GRACE TOWARD ME WAS NOT IN VAIN. ON THE CONTRARY - I WORKED HARDER THAN ANY OF THEM - THOUGH IT WAS NOT I - BUT THE GRACE OF GOD THAT IS WITH ME."

- G. FINALLY - *HERE'S A 7th POSSIBILITY – IT'S B/C WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT THAT THERE'S NO GRACE OR MERCY UNLESS YOU DO EVERYTHING RIGHT.*

1. HERE'S THE PROBLEM WITH THAT THINKING – THAT'S NOT GRACE AT ALL - IT'S *PERFECTIONISM!*
2. AND A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK IT'S THE GOSPEL - BUT IT REALLY ISN'T ... IN FACT THAT MAKES THE “GOOD NEWS” OF THE GOSPEL “BAD NEWS.”
3. THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE CAN BEST BE SUMMARIZED IN THESE WORDS:

“WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS CHRIST DIED FOR THE *UNGODLY.*”
4. DON'T MISS THAT - GOD ACCEPTS US AS WE ARE AND HE GETS RID OF OUR SINS *BY THE POWER OF JESUS' OWN BLOOD.*
5. HE DOESN'T WAIT FOR US TO BECOME PERFECT ... AND IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS WE LOVE THE SONG - “JUST AS I AM - W/OUT ONE PLEA...”
6. NOW - DON'T GET ME WRONG – PLEASING & OBEYING GOD OUGHT TO BE THE GOAL OF EVERY BELIEVER.
7. BUT FACE IT - WE'RE FALLEN HUMAN BEINGS - & IT ISN'T POSSIBLE FOR US TO GET EVERYTHING RIGHT ... EVER!
8. IF WE COULD - WE WOULDN'T NEED A CROSS OR A SAVIOR - B/C WE'D BE SAVING OURSELVES!
9. WE WOULDN'T NEED JESUS AT ALL ... BUT WE CAN'T GET EVERYTHING RIGHT ... AND WE *DO* NEED HIM ... WE *DESPERATELY* NEED HIM.

10. ALSO - PLEASE APPRECIATE THAT IT ISN'T A MATTER OF MATHEMATICS:
"MY RIGHTEOUSNESS + GOD'S GRACE = SALVATION."
11. PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD THE OLD SAYING: "IF YOU SEE A TURTLE ON A
FENCE POST - YOU KNOW HE HAD SOME HELP GETTING THERE."
12. NO! THAT'S WRONG! HE DIDN'T JUST "GET SOME HELP" GETTING
THERE ... *SOMEBODY HAD TO PUT HIM THERE* ... B/C TURTLES CAN'T
JUMP AND TURTLES CAN'T CLIMB!
13. AND THAT'S HOW IT IS WITH GRACE ... WE HAVE NO RIGHTEOUSNESS
OF OUR OWN W/ WHICH TO PLEAD OUR CASE BEFORE GOD.
14. LISTEN TO PAUL - I COR. 1:30-31 - "AND B/C OF HIM YOU ARE IN CHRIST
JESUS - WHO BECAME TO US WISDOM FROM GOD - RIGHTEOUSNESS - &
SANCTIFICATION & REDEMPTION - SO THAT - AS IT IS WRITTEN - 'LET
THE ONE WHO BOASTS - *BOAST IN THE LORD.*'"

III. A PARABLE OF JESUS THAT HELPS US UNDERSTAND GRACE BETTER.

- A. IT'S FOUND IN MATT. 18:23-25 - & IT'S THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL
SER-VANT (RELATE THE HIGHLIGHTS)...
- B. PLEASE NOTICE THAT THE WORD "GRACE" IS NOT IN THE PARABLE - BUT
THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.
- C. WE NEED TO KNOW THAT "10,000 TALENTS" - "TALENT" IS A UNIT OF WEIGHT.
 1. SO IF WE'RE TALKING SILVER - THEN 10,000 TALENTS OF SILVER WOULD
APPROXIMATE "\$16 MILLION" ... IF GOLD ... THEN "26 MILLION."

2. THE AVERAGE DAILY PAY BACK THEN WAS A “DENARIUS” - APPROX. 16 CENTS.
 3. AT THAT RATE - IF A PERSON PAID EVERYTHING HE EVER MADE IN HIS LIFE-TIME - IT WOULD TAKE 1, 625, 000 DAYS OR APPROX. 4400 YEARS OR 60 LIFETIMES TO PAY OFF THAT KIND OF DEBT.
- D. THE POINT IS ... *HE COULD NEVER PAY IT* ... EVEN THOUGH HE SAID HE WOULD.
1. SO HIS MASTER SIMPLY *FORGAVE* HIM THE DEBT - “OUT OF PITY” - & NOT B/C HE COULD OR WOULD EVER PAY IT BACK.
 2. THE HOPELESS DEBTOR IS *US* IN THAT STORY!
 3. WHAT WE OWE B/C OF OUR SINS IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PAY - BUT GOD FOR-GIVES OUR DEBT OF SINS AND THEN EXPECTS US TO DO LIKEWISE FOR OTHERS.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

1. SO - THAT’S WHAT GOD’S GRACE IS ...IT’S OWING GOD *EVERYTHING* ... BUT BEING UNABLE TO PAY *ANYTHING* ...
2. ...YET BEING FORGIVEN OF ALL OUR SIN DEBT B/C OF JESUS’ BLOOD - B/C THERE’S SIMPLY NO OTHER WAY.
3. WHAT A POWERFUL MOTIVATION IT IS TO CAST OURSELVES COMPLETELY ON HIS GRACE!

4. NO PAY-BACK .. NO BARGAINS MADE W/ GOD ... NO PLEA-BARGAINING W/ THE JUDGE ... JUST ACCEPTING BY OUR FAITH & OBEDIENCE WHAT HE OFFERS BY GRACE.
5. SO - ARE YOU READY TO SAY WITH PAUL: “BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM?”
6. IF SO - THEN REPENT & BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST - & DO IT TODAY!

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