

Series: **The Scandal of Grace** – week 10 of 11

CDOBC – beginning on 9/10/17

Today's Title: **“Angry at Grace”**

November 12, 2017 - Luke 15:23-32

OBJECTIVE: To help explain how grace and legalism are not compatible.

The Prodigal - Abridged (skitguys.com) - Split this video into 3 segments:

Video segment #1 = 0:00 - 1:49 (*'I knew he would come back one day'*)

Video segments #2 & 3: segment #2 = 1:50 - 3:45/3:46 (*'I don't deserve to be called your son'*)

:02 black screen separating the 2 clips (fade on front & back of black screen) - segment #3 = 3:46 - 5:00 (*video ends with black screen with text: Luke 15:11-32*)

Video clip = 3:10

Turn/tap in your bible to *Luke 15...*

Grace leaves many religious people uneasy and nervous.

Religious people like structure and rules, and God's grace flows to those who fail at keeping the rules!

“If your preaching of the gospel of God's free grace in Jesus Christ does not provoke the charge from some of antinomianism, you're not preaching the gospel of the free grace of God in Jesus Christ.” - D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

To the self-righteous, grace collides with the rules of religion.

Grace leaves open too many doors - and it invites people into the church who don't have a clean background.

Grace was the primary reason the religious leaders in 1st century Israel hated Jesus.

The religious leaders were legalist - rule-watchers - arrogant, self-righteous, and they taught the way to God - the way to

be forgiven - is to keep all the rules and to live with honor, dignity and obedience.

We see in vs. 1 of **Luke 15** the reason the religious leaders - the Pharisees - hated Jesus.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him.

Jesus didn't attract the normal religious crowd. The normal church people weren't the ones drawn to Jesus.

Jesus gave divine grace to people.

He gave divine truth to them...along with His grace.

God's grace attracts the lost.

If a church becomes known for giving grace, it will make a huge impact for eternity!

This is one of the reasons the Pharisees hated Jesus. They hated Him out of jealousy, for the people loved Jesus and were amazed at His teaching and His miracles, but they were not very fond of the Pharisees - which caused them to be insanely jealous of Jesus.

They also hated Jesus because He threatened their place of power which the Romans allowed them to hold.

John 11:47b-48 (Discussion among the religious leaders - Sanhedrin)

“What are we to do? For this Man performs many signs.

48 If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

But I believe their greatest hatred was due to the grace Jesus showed people who didn't meet the righteous ideals of the Pharisees.

Vs. 2: And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

This appalled them - and it appalled them so much that they began to accuse Jesus of being empowered by the Devil.

Luke 11:15

But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons...”

They hated Jesus because of His grace, mercy and love toward people.

The Middle-Eastern culture of Jesus’ day had a high regard for honor, respect, shame and dignity. Reputation and appearances were highly valued, and it was a culture which was devoid of grace, and centered on *earning* love, *earning* respect, on *working* toward restitution.

The religious leaders were the poster-boys of these cultural values. This was the view of God they taught - a harsh, stern God who loves those who work hard and thereby deserve His love.

The parables Jesus tells in Luke 15 tell the story of a God unlike the God of the Pharisees.

The parable of the lost sheep speaks to the passion and love God has for the lost.

The parable of the lost coin speaks to the joy God has when someone who was spiritually lost is found.

The parable of the Prodigal Son teaches the wonderful grace of God for the rebellious soul who repents.

It tells of the joy of the Father and His full embrace when someone repents.

It speaks to the abundance of God's grace as the prodigal son returns after everything he has done, and the Father instantly restores him to wholeness - as a full member of the family.

In vs. 22, *he is given a robe* - just as believers in Christ are not only forgiven of their sins, but they are clothed with the righteousness of Jesus.

He is given a ring - which gave him the authority of being part of the family - just as believers in Christ are made heirs with Christ.

He is given sandals. Slaves and hired workers went barefoot - only masters and sons wore sandals. The sandals were more evidence of his full restoration into the family.

He doesn't have to make penance - the father doesn't ridicule him or sit down and have a long talk to make sure he understands all the things he did wrong and how he disrespected his father. The repentance of the son unleashes the full measure of the father's love, forgiveness, grace and joy!

But the parable also speaks to the Pharisee - the religious, self-righteous legalist in every era - who scorns the grace and joy of God and views a celebration for saved sinners with crossed arms, refusing to join the party.

It's important for us to know: Jesus was telling this parable to the Pharisees mentioned in vs. 1-2. They are His audience - He's teaching them the truth about God!

It's a parable which carries a wonderful message of grace, forgiveness and joy for the wayward and rebellious sinner who repents, but it also offers the same message of grace for the self-righteous, religious, legalistic person.

3 So He told them this parable..."

This morning I want to focus on the "older son".

The older son represents the Pharisees who were grumbling and complaining about Jesus. The older son represents the long-time church attender, who is unhappy - maybe even angry when outsiders - new people - come into the church. Let's begin in vs. 23, as we pick up the story of the older son.

Read vs. 23-32

God celebrates when 1 sinner repents! vs. 23-24

This is the heart of God! We see the heart of God all through the parables in Luke 15: vs. 6b, 9b, 22-24.

The other 2 parables lead up to this revelation about God's joy and excitement over every sinner who repents.

The "fattened calf" would have been a calf raised specifically for such an occasion. It was not grass fed - it wasn't a calf which ate by grazing in the field. The Greek word tells us this was a grain fed calf, which

means it would be a higher quality meat, with greater marbling - better flavor.

This “fattened calf” would have fed as many as 200 people - so this was not simply a nice party for the family. The entire town would have been invited!

Since this was an impromptu party, the servants and hired hands would have begun work immediately to get ready for the party. Butchering the calf and then beginning to cook the meat was obviously a priority.

Getting ready to host a few hundred people is no small challenge, and it must have been a frantic afternoon.

Musicians would have been hired - numerous servants would have gone throughout the town giving a public invitation to the celebration dinner that night.

Meat was not a normal part of the diet in those days.

Meat was for special occasions. It was very expensive, but this was a worthy celebration!

Guests would have arrived as they were able to finish the day's work, get home, and everyone would have made their way over to the estate of this wealthy man who was throwing this great party.

Music and dancing was also on the menu - which tells us they probably weren't Baptists.

The reason for this magnificent celebration?

Vs. 24: “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.”

Do you celebrate when you hear of someone repenting - someone putting their faith in Jesus Christ?

Do you celebrate your own faith - the grace you have experienced from God in Christ?

Does your worship represent a heart that is grateful - a heart which celebrates the goodness, joy and grace of your Heavenly Father?

I hope so...

But we all know people who attend church - they are physically here - but they don't have any joy - they don't celebrate the grace of God.

Self-righteous sinners don't celebrate repentant sinners. vs. 25-28a

Self-righteous religious people value rules over grace. They value religious appearances and behavior above repentance and faith. They place obedience to a list of rules above forgiveness, mercy, love and grace.

The self-righteous moralist might be a believer in Christ - they may have faith, but they have placed unnecessary burdens on their faith - much like we read about in the book of Galatians.

However, many self-righteous moralists are not believers - they don't have faith in Christ because they

believe in their own good works. They have been blinded by their own pride and believe they are good enough to merit God's favor - to earn forgiveness and salvation, which is impossible to do.

While the party is at full speed, the older brother comes in from the day's work. The fact that he couldn't hear the sounds from the party until he was close to the house tells us this was a very large estate, which is a symbol of the vast Kingdom of God.

Don't be mistaken thinking he was working out in the field, doing physical labor. It was common for the landowner to supervise the workers in the field. He was likely under the shade of a tree - or some other shelter as he supervised the workers in the fields.

Nobody has told him about his younger brothers return! The father has not told him.

In that culture, the older brother was in charge of throwing the big celebrations. Normally, he would have been the one to organize the party.

But he doesn't know anything about it!

The father never asks him to be involved...why? It's either due to the spontaneous nature of this party, or because the father knows how his older son feels about his younger brother. Resentment. Hatred. Disrespect.

You see, the older son was just as lost as the younger son - quite possibly more lost. He's in the field, but he's a long way from the house.

The father's in the house, but there is no relationship with the father.

From a distance, he can hear the music - Greek = *symphonias* and *choros* - where our English 'symphony' and 'chorus' are from. He hears the sounds of a huge party - and he asks some of the servant boys (Greek term '*paidon*' - *child*) - the adults are inside celebrating - kids were relegated to the fringes - playing games outside. They tell the older brother what is going on - and they say the younger brother is "safe and sound".

vs. 27 - "safe and sound" - Greek = '*well, good health, uncorrupted, pure, whole*' - we get our English word 'hygiene' from this term - and it speaks not only of the Prodigal's physical health, but to his total health - a holistic view of him. In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the O.T.) this term almost always translates the Hebrew *Shalom* - which refers to 'peace' - inner and outer peace.

"He was angry and refused to go in." **vs. 28a**

The prodigal son and father were now at peace - restored...but the older son was not at peace with his father.

God begs the self-righteous to repent and celebrate. vs. 28b-32

“entreated” in the Greek is: *parakaleo* (noun form is the word for Holy Spirit - the helper who comes alongside).

The father would have been told that his older son was refusing to come in - that his older son was angry.

Rebel son #2 - a different form of rebellion.

The younger son was rebelling against all rules - he wanted life without limits - freedom to indulge the flesh.

The older son was rebelling against grace and forgiveness. He was devoid of love for both his brother and his father.

His refusal to attend the party would have been a public disgrace for the father.

This party was in the father's honor - the youngest son would be the honored guest, but the party is to celebrate the father. His lost son has returned - his family is restored - his sadness is replaced with joy - but the older son is “angry”.

Why is he angry? Because, in his mind, the father is a fool - throwing a party for his idiot brother who disrespected the father, asked for his inheritance, wasted everything on “prostitutes”, and instead of scolding and demanding restitution and publicly shaming his prodigal brother, the father throws a huge party for him!

vs. 29 - ...but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.’

The details in vs. 29 reveal the older brother's relationship with his father was through his work.

“Those words (vs. 29) betrayed the fact that the older brother thought he had a relationship with his father because of his work. He served his father not out of love but out of a desire for reward. He even thought of himself as being in bondage to his father.” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary)

He even refers to himself as a slave - *douleuo*:

“Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command...”

His life is a joy-less existence - no love for the father - he sees himself as a slave who obeys what he's told - waiting to receive what he's earned.

A “young goat” would be a special meal - enough for a pretty good sized party, but much smaller than the “fattened calf”. The celebration he envisions is not with his father or his brother - just with his “friends”.

He sees his father as a means to an end. He obeys - not out of love - not due to a loving relationship, but simply to get his share of the estate when his father dies.

In vs. 31-32, the father responds to his son, but he doesn't answer his accusations directly.

With gentleness and love he tells his son he's had access to everything for years!

“all that is mine is yours”

If you're a believer in Christ, everything He has is yours!

Ephesians 1:7b-8a

“the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us...”

vs. 13-14 “the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance...”

Ephesians 3:8 (Paul says the preaching of the Gospel contains...)

“the unsearchable riches of Christ...”

It is true in one sense - we should see ourselves as “servants” of Christ (Gr. - *doulos* - Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10). But at the same time, we're “fellow heirs with Christ” -

Romans 8:16b-17

“...we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.”

Do you embrace your adoption into the family of God?
Do you realize your full status as children of God - who have the full rights of *son-ship/daughter-ship*.

Read **Galatians 3:26-4:7**

The parable ends abruptly...with the father's words,

vs. 32 - “It was fitting to celebrate and be glad...”

Apply it...

Celebrate repentance and salvation

The Church needs to have the heart of God - we need to celebrate when a sinner repents and puts their faith in Christ!

- Our worship must be a celebration
- Our fellowship must have joy
- Baptisms! I love the celebration spirit - the clapping - the joy which fills the room!

God calls all sinners to repentance

Those who don't want any rules

Those who think they obey the rules

Which one are you?

Close in prayer