

“What Grace Looks Like”
Genesis 43:15-34
June 25th, 2017

In his book *The Grace Awakening*, Chuck Swindoll writes: ‘I vividly remember my last spanking. It was on my 13th birthday, as a matter of fact. Having just broken into the sophisticated ranks of the teen world, I thought I was something on a stick. My father wasn’t nearly as impressed as I was with my great importance and new-found independence.

I was lying on my bed. He was outside the window on a muggy October afternoon in Houston, weeding the garden. He said, ‘Charles, come out and help me weed the garden.’ I said something like: ‘No...it’s my birthday, remember?’ My tone was sassy and my deliberate lack of respect was eloquent. I knew better than to disobey my dad, but after all, I was the ripe old age of 13.

He set a new 100-meter record that autumn afternoon. He was in the house and all over me like white on rice, spanking me all the way out to the garden. As I recall, I weeded until the moonlight was shining on the pansies.

That same night he took me out to a surprise dinner. He gave me what I deserved earlier. Later he gave me what I did not deserve. The birthday dinner was grace.’

Ah, grace! Perhaps the best word in all the Bible! *What comes to mind when you think of grace? Do you know what grace looks like?*

For sure, we have in today’s sermon text an illustration of grace that works itself out in at least three ways. We’re in the second half of the Bible’s opening book **Genesis Chapter 43** today, and we’re deep into a continuing Sunday morning sermon series I’ve entitled *The Book of Beginnings: God’s Grace in Genesis*.

The scene is a return of Jacob’s sons (Joseph’s brothers) to Egypt during a severe famine. On their first trip (Chap. 42), the brothers met Joseph (though they didn’t know it was him). Figuring out who his visitors were, Joseph detained one of his brothers – Simeon – and sent the brothers back to Canaan, loaded down with grain and their own silver, with instructions to bring back Benjamin on their third trip so he could see him.

You’ll remember Jacob was beside himself in grief, thinking that Joseph was dead, that he’d never see Simeon alive again, and that Benjamin, too, would never get back to Jacob if he let him go. That brings us to the text before us today.

Genesis 43:15-34:

¹⁵ So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph. ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, “Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon.” ¹⁷ Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph’s house.

¹⁸ Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph’s house; and they said, “*It is* because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys.”

¹⁹ When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house, ²⁰ and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food; ²¹ but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, *each* man's money *was* in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand. ²² And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks."

²³ But he said, "Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.

²⁴ So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed. ²⁵ Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

²⁶ And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth. ²⁷ Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? *Is* he still alive?"

²⁸ And they answered, "Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive." And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

²⁹ Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son." ³⁰ Now his heart yearned for his brother; so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went into *his* chamber and wept there. ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread."

³² So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians. ³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another. ³⁴ Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him."

Author Pete Alwinson defines grace as "doing good for someone when there is no compelling reason to do so and every reason not to." (Brown, *What Was I Thinking?* 208) "Grace is far more than bare forgiveness. It is not a hollow "get out of hell free" token. Grace is active and dynamic." (MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Paul*, 120) "The grace of God is on the loose. (It) has been on the move since before creation, roaming wild and free. Grace keeps breaking through barriers and casting away restraints. Grace shatters the mold. " (Mathis, *Habits of Grace*, 21-23)

I submit that we have here three manifestations of God's grace illustrated in Joseph's treatment of his brothers.

MP 1 – God Opens His Kingdom (Home) to the Unworthy

MP 2 – Christ is the Christian's Peace

MP 3 – God Lavishes His Love on His Children

Verses 16 and 17 reveal our first point of grace - **God Opens His Kingdom (Home) to the Unworthy**. Look to those verses again – "When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon." ¹⁷ Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house."

Joseph is opening his home to his visitors (which must've been quite the abode, given his status as second in command over all of Egypt). He directs the steward of his house to prepare a

meal for all of them to enjoy. (Remember, this was a time of famine – such big meals probably weren't enjoyed by the likes of Hebrews traveling to Egypt for food). Joseph exercises incredible kindness to his visitors – as such, he is a hospitable host – “Gospitality” I like to call Christian hospitality.

Given we live on the other side of Calvary – meaning the Messiah whom Joseph prefigures here in Genesis was manifested in the arrival of God the Son, Jesus Christ, to earth as the opening gospel accounts of the New Testament all declare – we realize that when God saves people from the punishment due their sins, He also saves us to the fellowship of His people. His people were believing Israel in the Old Testament, and they are the Church in the New Testament. There is one people of God transcending the two testaments, Old and New.

The Church is the Centerpiece of God's Kingdom. Only those whom God saves are allowed in. Entry to God's paradise is open to those whom God the Father chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, the very same ones that Jesus came to earth from heaven to save. **Genesis Chapter 3** closes with Adam and Eve being driven out of the Garden of Eden by God, and cherubim and a flaming sword guarding the way to the Tree of Life.

But, with the first coming of Jesus to earth, born as a baby to a young, virgin mother, paradise lost became paradise found. This is from the great Easter hymn by Charles Wesley, “Christ the Lord is Risen Today”:

“Love's redeeming work is done, Alleluia!
Fought the fight, the battle won, Alleluia!
Death in vain forbids Him rise, Alleluia!
Christ hath opened paradise, Alleluia!”

In the **Gospel According to John Chapter 10**, Jesus calls Himself the gate (door) of the sheep. He said, “I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” (**John 10:7b-9**) We enter the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. And, we will sup with Him at the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” mentioned in **Revelation 19:9, 17**.

The really amazing thing is that none of us is worthy of entering God's kingdom. Like Joseph's brothers, none of them would have been in Joseph's palatial home if Joseph hadn't invited them there. Likewise, none of us deserves grace; rather each of us stands condemned – apart from Jesus Christ – we are headed to hell. **Romans 5:8 & 10** teach, “⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ¹⁰For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

Application: *Have you received the grace of God in salvation? Have you answered His call to come to Him?* If you do not know for sure, then I strongly encourage you to make an appointment to meet with me, or to get in touch with an elder or trusted Christian friend. Make certain of your eternal destination today. No, you don't deserve heaven in your own goodness; I certainly don't deserve heaven! But, if you sense God calling you, then you must surrender to Him. Hear Him, believe Him, follow Him, live for Him, and die for Him. Trust Him today!

Our second point is found in verse 23 - **Christ is the Christian's Peace.** These are the steward's words in verse 23 'Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.' Then he brought Simeon out to them."

The noun 'peace' in Hebrew (shalom) denotes harmony, well-being and happiness. Joseph's steward comforts the brothers with a wish of peace. In so doing, the brothers are instructed there is nothing to fear in coming to Joseph's home for a meal. He reminds them that God is abundant in His graces – He is the one Who gave them the money in their sacks.

Seeing Simeon must also have brought them comfort. It is likely that it had been at least several months since they had last saw him.

Peace with God and others is only possible in living a vital life honoring Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 2:14a** reads, "For He (Jesus) Himself is our peace..." **The Gospel According to John 14:27** teaches of Jesus, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

In 1555, Nicholas Ridley was burned at the stake in England because of his witness for Christ. On the night before Ridley's execution, his brother offered to remain with him in the prison chamber to be of assistance and comfort. Nicholas declined the offer and replied that he meant to go to bed and sleep as quietly as ever he did in his life. Because he knew the peace of God, he could rest in the strength of the everlasting arms of his Lord to meet his need.

Application: We live in a world of conflict, struggles, and battles. This life offers no lasting peace. Yet, even though we may profess saving faith in Christ, we are prone to conflict. *Are you in disagreement with others in your family, at work, school, or here in this church family? Perhaps you are trying to force your preferences or issues upon others, in an attempt to control them? Stop it – your way isn't likely the only way; we have to learn to get along, and do so in such a way that the unbelieving world around us takes notice! We must be at peace with God and with others -*

Our third illustration of God's grace is found in verses 24 and 34 - **God Lavishes His Love on His Children.** This is verse 24 – "So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed." Not only did Joseph invite his visitors in for a meal, he went to great lengths to make sure they – and their animals (transportation) - were taken care of.

Dropping down to the last verse of the chapter (34), we see something curious – "...Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs. So they drank and were merry with him." Joseph had a special affection for his only full brother – only Joseph and Benjamin could call Jacob and Rachel Dad and Mom. They were the favored sons of their father, Jacob. And, Joseph showed his favor toward Benjamin in piling up the food on his plate – 5 times the amount of any of the others!

This reflects on God's provision for us, too. He doesn't skimp; He doesn't get by in doing only the bare minimum. He *lavishes* his love on His children – those of us who are His by faith in Jesus Christ. Listen how the apostle John explains it in **I John 3:1:**

“What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we’re called children of God! That’s who we really are. But that’s also why the world doesn’t recognize us or take us seriously, because it has no idea who he is or what he’s up to.”

Psalm 68:19 teaches us of God’s abundant blessing – “Blessed *be* the Lord, *Who* daily loads us *with benefits*, the God of our salvation!”

A favorite contemporary Christian group of mine is the David Crowder band. Listen to these lyrics from their song, “How He (Jesus) Loves:”

“And we are His portion and He is our prize
Drawn to redemption by the grace in His eyes
If His grace is an ocean, we’re all sinking!

And heaven meets earth like an unforeseen kiss,
And my heart turns violently inside of my chest.
I don’t have time to maintain these regrets
When I think about the way -

He loves us, oh, how He loves us!”

Application:

Friends, let us not skimp on our love for one another! Rather, let us pour our love on one another! Let us be abundant in our giving to the Church (finances, time and talents). Let us be over the top in our ministry of mercy to those in need both within and outside of the church. When we have opportunity to serve each other, let us outdo one another in our serving – don’t be content with just enough to get by. The world is watching!

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