

9.15.19 ~ Ephesians 4:7, God's Gift of Grace through Christ...

Last week (**Ephesians 4:3-6**), we studied the unity we have in the family of God: one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father.

Ephesians 4:7 directs our attention to God's gracious relationship with each individual believer -- "to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it" [lit., according to the measure of the gift of Christ].

What we have been freely given by God, comes through His Son, Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:23-24**) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Grace is a single word definition of the Gift of Christ, i.e., a holy and righteous God reached down to sinful man, offering Himself as the sovereign payment for all our sin and the eternal provision for all our needs.

God has presented us (**Ephesians 1:3**), with "every spiritual blessing in Christ," sufficient to meet all of our needs, now and forever (see **1Peter 1:3-7; 2Peter 1:2-7**).

See Ephesians 1:13-14... God has marked us with His Spirit, sealing us as His eternal possession.

See Ephesians 2:1-9... Through God's merciful and undeserved kindness, although we deserve judgment and punishment because of our sins, we have been graciously granted forgiveness for our sins and eternally life, in Christ.

It has been said that the Old Testament is a book of Law, and the New Testament is a book of Grace (**John 1:17**), "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ."

The Law didn't soften the hearts of Israel toward God, it only hardened them; at which time God vacated the temple and ceased to speak to Israel; and after 400 years of silence, God brought forth John [lit, "God is Gracious"] the baptizer to point mankind to God's Grace, fully expressed in and through the person of God's Son, who is God's Presence [Immanuel] and God's Salvation [Yeshua].

See Hebrews 10:1-10...

Romans 3:20, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in [God's] sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin."

Jesus came (cf. Matthew 5:17) to fulfill the Law, not to abolish it; in fact the Law is meant to convict us of sin, so that we will turn to Christ to be set free from the penalty of sin (cf. **Romans 6:23**).

D.L. Moody said, "The Law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out."

The apostle John declared (**John 20:31**) that the revelation of God is given in Scripture, "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and

that believing you may have life in His name,” and that is **GRACE**: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.

God’s revealed Word [Word of Truth] is our authority, God’s Spirit [Spirit of Truth] is our teacher and God’s Son [the way the Truth and the Life] is the embodiment of all things God.

It is all about truth and grace, and yet, there seems to be a growing lack of confidence in God’s provisions through Christ. Instead of sin’s conviction through the hearing of God’s Word, which should lead to repentance, people are being told to seek a therapist and/or a ‘support group’ (of persons like themselves), that they might cope with and/or just accept their ‘so-called’ problems (i.e., bad habits, addictions, neuroses, repetitive sins, etc.) instead of confessing them and making the necessary changes in their belief systems and behaviors.

The message from many pulpits today is an obscured mixture of media and sports stories, contemporary trends and fads; this so-called preaching is really more about felt needs nurturing, and self-esteem boosting; when it ought be about the proclamation of God’s Word, calling people to agree with and act upon the sovereign truths revealed in the Scripture.

Instead of urging people to worship God and to live in obedience to God’s Word, the majority of pulpits and pundits seem be offering quick and easy fixes to life’s struggles through current psycho babel diagnoses, pointless platitudes, and flowery sermonettes for Christianettes, seeking to bring about good feelings, rather than a right relationship with God (**2Timothy 4:3-4; 1Peter 1:13-16**).

The truth of God often brings conviction, which, when it leads to repentance, brings forgiveness and a right relationship with God. Many in the church today condemn the confrontation of sin calling it insensitive, intolerant, and even unloving.

Jesus Christ was not a motivational speaker or an entertainer; He was God Incarnate full of grace and truth, and His message of salvation always included the sinner’s need to agree with God and to repent, i.e., to turn from our self-centered sins to all things God. Jesus’ message wasn’t popular 2,000 years ago, and it isn’t popular today; but it is sovereign truth and the only way to receive God’s Grace.

More and more churches are moving away from a clear and accurate proclamation of God’s Word that confronts sin and provides answers in a world full of chaos, confusion, deception and destruction; a world that desperately needs the hope of God’s gracious salvation that only Christ can provide.

Luke describes the believers at Berea as noble people because they searched the Scriptures before they accepted anything Paul taught them (**Acts 17:11**), “Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”

Where are the noble Christians today? Why do so many in the church tolerate false doctrines, false teachers, and worldly behaviors that dishonor God? The church is plagued with both apathy and ignorance, causing many Christians to accept, or at the least, to not object a wide variety of unbiblical beliefs and behaviors; while, at the same time, those believers and followers of Christ who stand against this Godlessness, are branded divisive, narrow minded, intolerant, and unloving.

Listen, if we tolerate error we will become indifferent to truth, and that will lead to disaster. The need for Christians to earnestly live out and promote life, with a Berean perspective, has never been greater.

We have graciously been given everything we need in God's Son; that we might know, trust, serve, and honor God; therefore, God's people are to think, act, speak, and be different, because of Jesus Christ, who is in fact God in the flesh.

Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

1Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord."

As a Christian, you have been given specific gifts that you are to use for God's glory and for the benefit of God's people. And you are responsible to study and to know the Word of God, and to apply it to your own life where others might see God's Grace living in you.

1Peter 3:15, "sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

If you belong to Christ, you have been given all you need to enjoy this life and to serve God honorably on earth, while trusting Him for eternity in heaven -- and all this has come in and through, Jesus Christ, the Giver of Gifts, the greatest being

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And all God's people said? Amen!

Pastor Mike

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