

Capturing Grace

By Pastor Greg
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2 Samuel 19:15-23

Bunkertown COB

I heard on the news the other day that Susan Atkins is asking for parole. Susan was part of the Manson family murders that took place back in August of 69. She confessed to assisting in the murder of actress Sharon Tate who was 8 ½ months pregnant. During the report, the newscaster said something that caught my attention. They said that Susan was looking for the same grace she refused to give Sharon. I got the impression that granting grace to this woman was a thought too astonishing for the broadcaster to grasp. After all, she had committed a beastly crime. There should be no grace. For her crime, she should die behind bars.

I've come to expect this type of attitude from the people in this world. Grace is such a foreign word anymore. That's why, when grace IS given, the world is astonished. "Why" or "How" they will ask. How can you show grace? Why did you show grace? Grace has caught the world off guard because grace was the last thing on its mind.

We translate the word *charis* by the English word "**grace**," which means, apart from its theological sense, a rich endowment of charm and beauty, a thing which is essentially a gift. When Christians talk about Grace, we most often mention the Grace that falls upon us through Christ our Savior. God, in His infinite grace, chose to send His Son to pay the penalty for our sinfulness. We sing about His Amazing Grace. With outstretched arms and joyful hearts, we praise the Father for the gift of His grace "While we were still sinners". I confess to you that my stone cold heart melts under the warmth of this thought. The thought that even though I did nothing to deserve this grace, it was grace I received when Jesus became my Lord & Savior. But this is not the only Grace you will find in the Bible. Read carefully and you will find Grace dripping from page to page. You'll find story after story when Grace not just falls from Heaven, but also from the lips of fellow human beings.

As King David was leaving Jerusalem (remember that Absalom was trying to take over the throne), he encounters a relative of King Saul. (**Read 2 Samuel 16:5-11**). This uprising ends with the tragic death of Absalom, and David returning to

Jerusalem. But just as they were about to cross the Jordan River, guess who runs out to greet him. (**Read 2 Samuel 19:15-23**).

I love the way grace falls from King David's lips. I can almost see the expressions on the faces of those around him. David's men were astonished, especially since Shimei did not deserve grace. But Grace is what Shimei received even though it looks like he was just trying to save his neck. This disingenuous apology did not fool King David though. He apparently saw straight through Shimei, for he later tells Solomon to deal with him wisely (1 Kings 2:9). But see, this is what I find amazing. David spares his life even though the groveling man at his feet did not deserve grace.

We speak often about the grace we receive from God, and its ability to transform lives. But here I see demonstrated the power Grace yields when it falls from the mouth of a man. Had David dealt sharply with Shimei, chances are the bitterness between him and Saul's family would have lasted for generations. No one expected grace that day by the shores of the Jordan River, yet grace came none-the-less. The power of Grace was unleashed upon this unsuspecting and undeserving world.

The power Grace yields is something to behold. It pours cool water on the fires of destruction. It heals wounds that have bled for years. This kind of Grace is the first to lay down its weapon, the first to hold its tongue, the first to see what truly matters in the affairs of men. And although grace shocks this world, does not the world recognize this kind of Grace the moment it is seen? Yet the world cannot comprehend it, for this kind of Grace cannot be captured with the mind. This kind of Grace can only be captured by the heart.

Two things I want to point out to you. First, no one can offer this kind of grace without first fully realizing that they have received it themselves. There was no way David could have spoken those words of Grace without first truly understanding grace or without first feeling its power. Remember that not too long ago David's life was spared after he confessed his sin and pleaded with God for mercy. *Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your*

great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. ¹ (Psalm 51:1-2) And I'm sure this incident made a lasting impression on David's heart. David had felt Grace's power. David had tasted God's mercy. And it is a thing not quickly forgotten.

Secondly, no one can offer this kind of Grace without catching the attention of a watching world. I can't help but wonder what this whole scene taught young Solomon as he watched his father do the unexpected. See, this is the greatest power Grace should have on our lives – not that we are overwhelmed by God's Grace toward us, but that it causes Grace to fall from our lips in this unsuspecting and undeserving world. This answers the question of "How" or "Why". Why do we give Grace? Because it was first given to us. How can we grant grace? Not according to our own strength or our own understanding, but according to the power of He who lives within us (see 1 John 4:4).

Have you tasted God's mercy? Have you felt the power of His grace? You should have experienced these things if you call yourself a Christian. You are not a Christian because you stand within the walls of a Church. You are a Christian when, like King David, you plead with God for mercy. You call on the name of Jesus to blot out the stain of your sin. And grace like rain falls down upon you from the mouth of God. Then that same kind of Grace needs to fall from our lips when someone asks for mercy from us. *Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.* ² (1 John 3:18)

So as we live in this world that does not know Grace, we Christians wield a power the world cannot comprehend. And through us, they just might get a glimpse of God's Grace. And maybe, just maybe, their hearts will capture God's Grace as well.

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

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