

Growing in Grace

Lesson # 14

“Grace Is Also Accepting”

[Taken from The Grace Awakening by Charles Swindoll. (Dallas: Word, 1990). Ch. 14, pp.279-299]

Last time we examine how grace affects the way that we give. Tonight we will see that grace not only causes us to give with joyful generosity, it receives with grateful humility! But the truth is that it cuts across the grain of our natural tendency to be self-sufficient and invulnerable. So let me ask, *“Just how open and accepting are you when others extend unexpected and undeserved grace in your direction?”*

I. The Flip Side Of Several Strengths

1. With Commitment To Excellence There Comes An Attitude Of Intolerance.

The result of becoming too focused on a commitment to excellence can be that no flaw is too small to correct and no accomplishment is so well done that it cannot be improved. This attitude of course can lead to a rejection of all who fail to measure up.

2. With A Lifestyle Of Discipline There Comes Impatience And The Tendency To Judge.

An example would be of a person who works hard to stay fit by eating better and less, while consistently participating in a rigorous program of exercise; can tend to be impatient of anyone who still eats junk food and thinks that a walk to the refrigerator is exercise.

3. With An Education And Love For Culture And The Arts, There Is Usually An Accompanied Feeling of Exclusive Sophistication.

I like what Haddon Robinson said of his own experience, *“I do not appreciate opera; what is worse, I have several friends who do.”* [Haddon Robinson. Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages. (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1980) p. 31 as quoted by Charles Swindoll. The Grace Awakening (Dallas: Word, 1990). p.281]

4. With An Emphasis On Independence And High Production, There Is A Presence Of Pride.

Capable and frequent givers find it the next thing to impossible to be grateful and willing receivers.

II. Examples of Resisting and Accepting Grace

1. We Resist Grace When Our Guilt And Shame Have Not Been Adequately Dealt With.

Guilt Nullifies Grace. Moses is a prime example of this in Scripture. Exodus 3 (2:11-3:12) records how Moses resisted grace when it was offered to him.

His story is also told in a condensed version in Acts chapter seven beginning in verse twenty.

"At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. (21) "But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. (22) "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds."

Moses was reared in the household of Pharaoh. He was given a first-rate education and for the first forty years of his life lived as the virtual son of the Pharaoh.

While in the court of Pharaoh he heard the voice of God telling him that he was to be the deliverer of his people the Hebrews. In verse twenty-three we read, *"Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel. (24) And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. (25) "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. (26) "And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?'(27) "But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? (28) 'Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?'" (29) "Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons."*

Unfortunately he tried to do what God had called him to do, in the strength of his own might and power, rather than waiting to do so God's way and in God's time. The result was a disaster. He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew slave. As a result everything changed for Moses and he had to flee for his life (Acts 7:20-34).

I have heard it said this way; *"Moses spend his first forty years in the palace learning to be a somebody. He spent the next forty years in the wilderness learning to be a nobody. He spent his last forty years leading the children of Israel, learning that God can make a nobody into a somebody."*

After fleeing for his life, Moses spent the next forty years tending sheep for his father-in-law on the backside of the desert. As far as we know for those forty years God was silent. Now look at Acts 7:30. *"And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai.(31) "When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, (32) "saying, 'I am the God of your fathers— —the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of*

Jacob.' And Moses trembled and dared not look. (33) 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. (34) "I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt."

I like the way Charles Swindoll tells the story, *"Abruptly out of the midst of a burning bush came a voice that he hadn't heard in decades, "Moses! Moses!" Incredible moment! He knew that voice, He remembered it from forty years before. There was no other voice like that one. He thought his life was finished. He had made such a mess of things, he had been convinced he would never hear that voice again. How wrong he was! Do you know what is in that voice? Grace!"* [Swindoll. p. 285]

F.B. Meyer has a wonderful perspective on these events, he says, *"There are days in all lives which come unannounced, unheralded; no angel faces look out of heaven; no angel voices put us on our guard; but as we look back at them in after years, we realize that they were the turning points of existence. Perhaps we look longingly back on the uneventful routine of life that lies beyond them; but the angel, with the drawn sword, forbids our return, and compels us forward. It was so with Moses. Then, suddenly, a common bush began to shine with the emblem of Deity; and from its heart of fire the voice of God broke the silence of the ages in words that fell on the shepherd's ear like a double knock "Moses, Moses." And from that moment all his life was altered. The door which had been so long in repairing was suddenly put on it hinges again and opened."* [F.B. Meyer. *Moses, the Servant of God.* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1980) p. 33-34 as quoted by Charles Swindoll. *The Grace Awakening* (Dallas: Word, 1990) p.286.]

But let's examine Moses response to the call of God. Instead of service Moses offered God a series of five excuses.

- Excuse One – The *"Who Me"* Excuse

(3:11-12).

"But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

It is a sense of guilt and shame that causes Moses to feel that he is incapable of performing the job that God has called him too. His past failure leaves him feeling that he will be rejected. God answers his excuse in verse twelve,

"So He said, "I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain."

Notice that God says in verse twelve *"when"* you have brought the people out, not *"if."* It is grace that makes nobodies into somebodies.

- Excuse Two – “By What Authority” (3:13-15)

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?’”

God’s answer is found in verse fourteen and fifteen, *“And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (15) Moreover God said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’”*

God tells Moses it does not have to do with who you are, it has to do with who *I AM*. But still Moses could not accept God’s message of grace.

- Excuse Three – The “What If’s” (4:1-9)

“Then Moses answered and said, ‘But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’”

In the King James Version this verse reads,

“What if....?” What if’s are grace killers. Because Moses was overly concerned about what “might” happen he didn’t hear what God said “would” happen.

In verse two through nine he assures Moses that he will have all the power that he needs.

“ So the LORD said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ He said, ‘A rod.’ (3) And He said, ‘Cast it on the ground.’ So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. (4) Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail’ (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), (5) ‘that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.’ (6) Furthermore the LORD said to him, ‘Now put your hand in your bosom.’ And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow.(7) And He said, ‘Put your hand in your bosom again.’ So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. (8) ‘Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. (9) ‘And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land . And the water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land.’”

Even after these miraculous signs he is still not convinced and he offers a fourth excuse.

- Excuse Four – “But Lord I don’t speak well”

(4:10-12, compare with Acts 7:22)

“Then Moses said to the LORD, “O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.”

In no uncertain terms God tells Moses he has all that he needs in verse eleven, *“So the LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?”*

God on to tell Moses in verse twelve that He does not need our abilities he desires our availability. *“Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”*

- Excuse Five – “Send Someone Else”

(4:13-17)

“But he said, “O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.”

This can also be translated, *“Please Lord send anyone else.”*

God answers Moses’ objections in verse fourteen, *“Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. (15) “Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do. (16) “So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you....”*

Unfortunately for Moses many of his future promises will come through his brother Aaron. It will be Aaron who leads the people in building and worshipping a golden calf (Exodus 32).

The chief cause behind the resistance of Moses was his own sense of guilt and shame.

2. We Accept Grace When We Release All Our

Expectations. The Biblical example of this principle is a man named Samson (Judges 16). Samson was dedicated by his parents to God (he was a Nazarite). He became one of the judges of Israel during the days of the Philistines. For two decades he worked at delivering the Israelites from Philistine dominion. In Judges 15:20 we are that Samson, *“And he judged Israel twenty years in the days of the Philistines.”* Yet in the very next verse (chapter 16:1) we read, *“Now Samson went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.”* Samson ruled by his own lust was soon found in Philistine country being led into a trap by Delilah. He was a prisoner of his own

Just long before the Philistine captured him, imprisoned him and put out his eyes. As a prisoner of the Philistines he was put to grinding grain. Then one day the Philistines decided to bring Samson into their temple so that they could make sport of him (Judges 16:25). At that time Samson called out to the Lord in verse twenty-eight saying, *"O Lord GOD, remember me, I pray! Strengthen me, I pray, just this once, O God, that I may with one blow take vengeance on the Philistines for my two eyes!"* Samson did not deserve new strength! He doesn't deserve the attention of God. But, without expectation he prayed, *"Just this once, Lord, I claim your grace!"* And God in his grace granted his request.

3. We Resist Grace When Our Pride Is Still Supreme.

In John chapter thirteen Jesus and his disciples gather to eat the last supper. As they sat they began to argue about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24-26). As they sat arguing Jesus got up and began to wash their feet (John 13:4-6). When he got to Peter, he was resistant. Our Lord had stooped and reached out in grace, but Peter dogmatically refuses. He said in verse eight, *"Lord you shall never wash my feet."* It is even more emphatic in the Greek where it is literally, *"No way, Lord..... never."* Pride holds us back and gives us a false impression that we are without need. *"The truth is that we are all needy people, it's just that some of us hide it better than others."* [p. 296]

4. We Accept Grace When We No Longer Put Confidence In the Flesh.

Where Peter resisted grace because of his pride, Paul is our biblical model of a person who accepted grace because he no longer put confidence in the flesh. Paul's pedigree is laid out in Philippians 3. In verse four he says, *"though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so (5) circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;*

(6) concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."

Paul says in effect, *"That my record!"* In the eyes of the world he might have impressive credentials, but in the sight of God he was lost and in great need.

In verse seven he went on to say, *"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. (8) Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; (10) that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (11) if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (12) Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (13)*

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

(14) I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Paul is saying in effect, "For too many years I went full speed ahead but in the wrong direction." Here is the record of a man who's testimony is that he had lost all confidence in his own credentials and realized that life lived without Christ is empty and meaningless.

III. What It Takes To Let Grace In

First, it takes an Admission of Humanity.

Grace only works in the lives of people who are willing to admit that they are just human, that they are not supermen or women but just ordinary needy people.

Second, it takes an Attitude of Humility.

Grace gives us the freedom stop being responsible for the results. If we are following God then he is the one in charge, he is the one responsible for the results we are only responsible to be found faithful (1 Cor 4:2).