

AMAZING GRACE

There is a real difference between God's plans for us and Satan's plans. As God dispenses grace, Satan dishes out condemnation. He knows that with a load of guilt on our backs, we will remain too ashamed to ask for grace from our Father. Over and over, we are lied to and made to believe that the filth of past mistakes clings to us regardless of how often we have asked for forgiveness. We are slow to realize that Satan is not God's equal and that a way of forgiveness has been provided.

Humiliation is a prime tool used to make us forget we are the children of God. It has become a prevalent spirit in our society. Jokes that belittle anyone and everyone have become the staple of our comedians. Where humor once depended on wit, it now hinges on pain. The laughter comes uneasily, knowing how swiftly the dagger might be turned upon us. That spirit should be hated and resisted whenever and wherever it is encountered. It is the last resort of those who feel so small inside that the only way they can believe they are of worth is to make someone else feel smaller. When these jokes are tolerated, society as a whole diminishes and Satan must laugh. We are made in the image of God, but when we forsake Him, what becomes of that image? When an entire nation turns its back on God, as the Communist nations did, the end result is the humiliation of the whole nation.

Sometimes we open ourselves up for attack through the weaknesses inherent in our actions. We feel cheated out of experiences of life by our commitment to God, so we step aside for a quick taste of the forbidden. If we make it back, the bed we have made is harder to lie on than it was before. We have been exposed to ideas and images that will forever be a part of our memories. We can ask for and receive forgiveness, but we will still live with temptations and desires that were not even possible before we tasted the forbidden. Paul said in 1 Cor. 6:12 that all things were lawful for him, but not all were expedient. He could be forgiven, but the consequences of his actions would still have to be suffered. Consequences of some sins, like children, disease, or injuries, will remain with us for the rest of our lives, even when the sin itself has been covered by the blood. Satan will use these reminders of our failures to depict us as worthy only of rejection by God, making us afraid to reach out for the love that is our birthright and has already been given..

This is why in Luke 4:17-21, Jesus quoted from Isaiah, saying that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him. He had come primarily to die, but His anointed ministry was one of liberation and healing of the bruised and brokenhearted captives. He demonstrated the power of love to overlook all things. Love that could cover a multitude of sins. Because only love can bring an end to degradation.

Mephibosheth knew what it felt like to sit in the throne room of kings. He ate regularly at the table of King Saul. He was royalty, the son of Jonathon, heir to the throne. After Saul and Jonathon died, he was nobody. Although badly crippled, custom still decreed that he should have been killed to end the bloodline of Saul. He was living in pain and poverty when David sent for him to come before the throne. And he was afraid. Imagine his surprise when he was restored once again into the household of the king. To sit at his table. For the rest of his life. It turned out that King David had loved his father and wanted to show kindness to his descendants.

Calvary was another event of mercy. Expecting only pain and death, imagine the surprise of the thief when Christ turned to him and invited him to accompany Jesus home. To become a part of the household of the King. To sit at His table. For the rest of eternity. It turned out that the King had loved his father Adam and wanted to show mercy to his descendants.

When the spirit is hurt and bent, the body quickly follows. Seeing either the body or spirit in pain offends the sensibilities of their Maker and moves Him to end the humiliation of His creation. The ultimate cure is forgiveness that is exactly equal to the guilt Satan heaps upon our spirits to drive us down. That is the dispensation of grace. That is the end of degradation. Forgiveness we can not understand, but must accept in order to claim our place as heirs in His kingdom. Sitting at the table of the King.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever let shame over disappointing God prevent you from coming back into His presence to ask for forgiveness?
2. Have you ever asked for forgiveness, sure that God would refuse, then been amazed by His grace?
3. Have you ever poked fun at or belittled one of your friends in front of your other friends? Was the laugh you got worth hurting them?
4. How would your life and circle of friends change if you made a point never to repeat, listen to, or laugh at jokes that belittle anyone else?
5. Without necessary sharing it, have you ever exposed yourself to sin in such a way that now you can not get certain images or temptations out of your mind and you desperately wished you had not had that experience?
6. What is a sin that you feel most people struggle with? What are some of the unending consequences of that sin that you can think of?
7. If you have ever had a friend really mess their lives up, rather than trying to figure out how to fix them, have you ever tried just letting them know they are loved?
8. What would your life become if you took a hard look at the reasons Jesus said in Isaiah that He came, then looked for ways and opportunities every day to do the same? Is it possible?
9. David had other sons of Saul killed. Why not Mephibosheth? If you were him, would you have come to David's house or would you have been afraid and tried to run away?
10. When God invites you to talk with Him, deep down, do you expect love or judgment?
11. Sitting at the table of grace, feasting on the blessings of the King, do you feel it is your right or do you feel humbled, unworthy, and grateful?