

On Prayer (the Power of Grace)

By: Mozelle Davis-Weeks - 2012-12

I used to confuse mercy with grace. It has been said that grace is God's unmerited favor. This is true, but it is so much more. Grace includes mercy, but it goes much further. I once heard a pastor speak on grace and mercy and his explanation is the best I have heard. It clarified the point for me. The pastor explained it this way: Suppose you had a son that you loved greatly, and a man broke into your house and murdered your son in a most horrible way. If you went out, found this man, and killed him in the same horrible way, that would be vengeance. If instead, you caught him and turned him over to the authorities, that would be justice. If instead, you caught him, had pity on him, and let him go, that would be mercy. If instead, you caught him, brought him back to your home, gave him everything that belonged to your son, and treated him as your son, that would be grace. You see, grace is so much more than forgiveness. Grace is empowering.

In Paul's epistle to Titus, he tells us specifically what grace will do for us.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodly and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. Speak these things, exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you." (Titus 2:11-15 NKJV)

God does not give us grace as a license to sin. We are reading here about holiness. Remember, grace is empowering. He gives us grace to get out of sin, to have victory, to forgive, to be kind, to have a pure and holy mind, to have right motives, and to be a woman or a man of integrity.

Get the balancing that is in all things in Christ – balancing, not between Christ and the world, but balancing of the things of Christ. Here the balancing is in the middle between having the power not to sin, to be holy and like Christ; and not getting in the trap of believing that we will be living a completely sinless life and pretending, therefore, that we are sinless when we are not. **BALANCING!** When we sin we have grace, but grace gives us power also, power not to have to sin.

Grace teaches us to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts." When? When we die? No, "soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age." The Bible says that Jesus gave himself for us that he may redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous (excited and enthusiastic) for good works. We are to be a people excited about not having to sin; excited about abiding in Christ; and excited about walking in the light.

When I speak about grace and prayer, I am speaking about victory. I am talking about praying through the problems in your life until they are gone.

The scripture says we don't have to sin. I have heard people (even preachers) say that we sin every day in thought, word and deed. I don't really believe that. I know that there are people who do, but I do not sin every day like that and you don't have to either. If you can have victory for an hour, you can have victory for a day. You don't have to sin. When you do sin, Christ has won the victory over that as well.

A sincere Christian desires not to sin, but also to be cleansed. I John 1:9 says that, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Being forgiven means not having to go to hell, but cleansing means a spring cleaning of the whole person.

Have you ever heard of anyone saying, "I want to be forgiven, but please don't cleanse me because I'm planning on a little more of that same sin a little later this evening"? You would say he was a hypocrite, and you would be right. The Lord wants to forgive us and cleanse us. The grace of God brings empowerment – salvation and deliverance, teaching us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" and to "live soberly, righteously and godly." He purifies us to himself as a godly people, "zealous for good works." I don't know if that excites you, but it should.

Another verse that deals with grace, Hebrews 12:15, tells us to be "looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and by it many be defiled."

The verse says to look diligently. Why? We must make sure that no one falls short of the grace of God, for this can lead to a root of bitterness. What does a root of bitterness do? It causes trouble and defiles many.

Preachers preach about many kinds of sins. Don't get drunk, don't steal, don't commit adultery, but the sin that effects more Christians is that root of bitterness. Hate, anger, and poison spring up and come out of the mouth and the Bible says, "Many are defiled."

We must understand that slandering, gossiping, whispering, backbiting, griping, complaining, grumbling and murmuring are only surface sins that come out of a root of bitterness. When someone gossips or slanders, grumbles, and complains, these are only symptoms of the real problem: unresolved bitterness in her heart. Because that hate is there, venom pours out of her mouth.

Have you ever known someone who took up someone else's offense? Psalm 15:3 says not to take up another's reproach. Because she is your friend, you are also offended; and the scripture becomes true. The root of bitterness springs up and many become defiled. Why does this happen? It happens because someone is not looking "diligently, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God." God gives us grace to forgive, but that grace moves from theory into our heart by prayer.

I remember kneeling with my husband, so hurt that all I could pray was, "Lord, I don't want to forgive. I want to stay mad. I want to stay hurt."

I had written an article for a Christian magazine and a woman at my church took some of the things I wrote personally. She called me on the telephone and fussed me out royally. She had become offended and embittered, imagining that I had to have been talking about her (I wanted to tell her that, if the shoe fit, then it's called conviction, but I didn't.) Some others at the church took up her offense as well. I did inform her that I had not been talking about her, but it did not matter. Being at that church with all those dirty looks just was not much fun.

My attitude was, "They can take that church and run with it. Boo on the whole bunch of them. If they are convicted about what I wrote, then it is their problem. I just want out of there." Those were the first roots of bitterness going down. I knelt and said, "Father, I don't want to change, but I know that the spirit I am in is not the Holy Spirit. I ask you to change me, Lord. Change my heart even though I don't want to change." I availed myself of the grace of God.

Scripture says, "looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God." You see the grace is there, but we must avail ourselves of that grace by getting down on our knees and saying, "Jesus, I don't have any love left; give me your love. Please wash my anger and hurt away with the blood you shed. Give me love again."

Then ask the Lord to heal your wounded spirit. Avail yourself of grace. "Lord Jesus, heal my wounded spirit. I don't care. I want to care. I don't care that I don't care." That is the way I felt that day. You have to be honest when you pray – painfully honest. We seek to worship him in spirit and in truth. After all, God knows your heart.

There we knelt – wounded and broken. Our prayer was, "You said you would heal the broken hearted. Heal my broken heart. You said you would free those that are bruised, and I am bruised. Heal my bruises and give me love for those people. I chose to forgive them. I choose to forgive them even though they don't deserve it because you forgave me when I didn't deserve it."

You may expect me to say that lightning hit me and I immediately felt bubbly. I didn't feel anything, but, when I got up off my knees, I knew that I had turned everything over to Jesus.

Recovery from a wounded spirit is like recovery from surgery; it is not always instantaneous. First you must learn how to walk again. Then you begin to regain your strength. Then the soreness begins to leave the wound. The scar is still there, but it begins to fade. Finally, after a time the scar is barely noticeable.

I do not want to leave this verse too soon because it is very serious. Read it again. Bitterness will not only cause trouble for you, but it will cause trouble for your children. Sitting around the supper table and tearing people at church down will defile your whole

family. While you defile your children, your home group, and everyone who touches you, your bitterness will become a contagion – an infectious cancer to everyone you know.

To have bitterness in your heart is wicked, not only because it is personal sin that is not forsaken, but because it destroys many other people. I personally am aware of whole churches that have been ruined by a root of bitterness. I know entire families that have been destroyed by a root of bitterness.

How do you receive the grace of God? By getting down on your knees and praying. Place yourself under Jesus' blood and avail yourself of God's love, God's grace, and God's forgiveness.

Look at Zech 4:6-7: "So he answered and said to me: 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: not by might nor by power, but by my spirit,' says the Lord of hosts. 'Who are you, oh great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!'"

Zerubbabel faced a mountain, and God said simply, "Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit." Most of us are familiar with this verse, but verse 7 is also for us. God tells Zerubbabel to shout to the mountain, "Grace, grace."

Jesus calls us to be mountain movers. Mark 11:23 says, "Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart... ..he will have whatever he says." It is not enough to simply speak about the mountain. We must speak to the mountain and say, "Be removed."

Have you ever had a mountain move in your life – a mountain of depression, fear, unclean thoughts, anger, bad habits, etc? You must shout, "Grace!" to that mountain. You have to say, "I put the grace of God right up in your face; and you, great mountain will become a plain!"

The key to prayer is that God is on your side! The key to that alliance is grace, which simply means God's enablement – God's power and ability released. You can overcome any sin and any mountain by the grace of God. But you must speak to it again and again, until you can say, "It wasn't by my might or by my power; it was by the spirit of the Lord."

On Prayer (Why Pray?)

By: Mozelle Davis-Weeks - 2012/9

If I love someone, I want to spend time with them. How can I say that I love my children or my husband if I hardly ever spend time with them? How can I say that I love the Lord if I hardly ever spend time with him? If the only time I ever pray is when I'm in church or in trouble, I don't even have much of a relationship with God. Statistically, where do most "Christians" do most of their praying? The answer is: in church. I want to know Jesus and, more importantly, I want him to know me. When Jesus stated that not everyone who called him "Lord, Lord" would enter the kingdom of heaven, He said he would say to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me you workers of iniquity." (Mat 7:21-23)

Do you like to pray? Do you enjoy your prayer time, or do you find it dull and boring? Do you believe that things happen because you pray, or do you just go through the motions because you are supposed to? We need to ask ourselves questions like these if we are going to learn to take prayer seriously.

Prayer should be enjoyable and it should be effective if we are going to be devoted to prayer as the believers in the first century were. This is why some pointers on prayer are needed to inspire people to pray more confidently and fervently. The purpose of this series of articles is to create a desire to reach out and touch the heart of God. The purpose is not to merely teach people about prayer, but to generate prayer. It is much more important, rather than have people simply learn about prayer, to have them actually pray.

There are 3 statements of faith about prayer that, when things are understood, will inspire people to believe and will help prayer become a vital and also an enjoyable part of Christian life.

1: Things will be different because I pray. If you pray for your spouse, your children, your best friend, or you parents, things will be different than they would've been. I mean that – things will be different. Because I prayed for my daughter this morning, I know that her day will be different than it would have been. I prayed for the United States of America last night, and I know that things will be different in the U.S. because I prayed. Prayer has an effect. It is more than worthwhile.

2: The throne of grace is wide open to me.

This is so very important. The throne of grace is open – wide open – to you, and anything on God's heart is available to you if you pray. Prayer is centered around the throne of grace.

3: Nothing is born without conception. Conception doesn't just happen. In the natural world, there must be a physical union. The same thing is true with the spiritual realm. There must be union for conception and there must be conception for anything to be birthed. This is true for puppies, calves, babies, or answers to prayer. Answers to prayer

do not just happen. Prayer is not hit-or-miss. There must be union with God. God operates on the basis of principles found in scripture. If we line up with what is on God's heart and what is in God's scripture, our spirit is put in union with his spirit, and conception takes place. Only when conception takes place is an answer to prayer born.

Do these statements inspire more faith in you? They inspire me and make me more eager to pray because I know they are true.

Let's take a look now at James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." What James is saying is: the earnest, continual, heartfelt, fervent prayer of a godly man or woman releases mighty power and effects. The word "fervent" in the KJV implies intensity and continuation. Therefore, I believe that the prayer James is talking about is earnest, continual, and heartfelt.

Notice that the second part of the verse says that the prayer of a godly person releases mighty power and effects. Something will happen when a godly person begins and continues to pray with all her heart. When we pray, mighty effects are released. Prayer causes things to happen in your marriage, your church, or your pastor's sermon.

When you pray, "My Lord, my God, speak to our pastor this Sunday. Anoint him, and flow through him. Give him a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge. Give him food for us, Father," your pastor will preach better. Things will be different on Sunday morning than they would have been because you prayed a continual, heartfelt, fervent prayer. That kind of prayer will release mighty miracles.

If you came to me with a problem, and I told you to pray about it, what would you think? You would probably think I had nothing to offer and just put you off with a cliché – "Pray about it."

Somehow, when we hear the word, "prayer," we think boredom and ineffectiveness. Why do you think that is? It isn't God's fault. The forces of darkness try to discourage us from realizing that the mighty power of prayer releases effects and miracles. That "ho hum, she told me to pray" feeling is from the enemy. The idea that prayer is a boring and ineffective task for times when nothing else can be said or done is completely false. James says that the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails – It accomplishes something!

Do you like to pray? Prayer should be one of your greatest sources of enjoyment. Although prayer is work, it can be your most delightful labor and your most important occupation.

I Col 4:12-13 we see, "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis."

Have you ever heard of Epaphras? He is nowhere near as well known as Paul, Apollos, or Timothy. But still, Epaphras is mentioned in holy scripture because he was an intercessor, and his chief delight was prayer. Paul mentioned his zeal because Epaphras prayed continually that believers would stand "perfect and complete in all the will of God."

You might say, "Well, I'm just a nobody. I just go to church. No one even knows who I am. I'm just one of the people in the next to the last row. I feel too inadequate." If you are an intercessor, you are one of the most important people in that congregation. Every pastor needs a whole crew praying for him and for his family, the church, the elder board. Every church needs several Epaphrases.

Devotion to prayer is loving to pray. Acts 1:14 says, "These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."