

GOD'S LOVE #5 – "UNLEARNING UNGRACE"

- Sometimes you can't learn something new until you've unlearned something old. You may not live in grace until you've unlearned ungrace.
- (Review) "Grace is love that meets another person's needs and is unearned." The basic purposes of grace are "acceptance" and "empowering". To receive grace we must approach him with faith and love.
- Sadly, we've been so conditioned by our performance-oriented culture and our self-oriented hearts that we haven't realized all the ungrace baggage we bring to our relationship with God.

The Ungrace of Needing to Clean Up Your Act to be Accepted by God in the First Place

► *Matthew 9:12-13 "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. . . 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* In other words, his love thrives on sinners. And when they know they are needy, his grace abounds!

- There's no sin or quantity of sins too big or too ugly or too hurtful that God can't forgive. And there's no sinner too sinful that God can't welcome and transform. (Example: Jeffrey Dahmer.)
- The Apostle Paul was a high-ranking Jewish spiritual leader who had Christians beaten and thrown into jail. Was God impressed with his "legalistic righteousness" that Paul said was "faultless"? No.
 - *Philippians 3:7-9 "But whatever were gains to me (meaning his rule-obedience) I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ..."*
- It wasn't about the rules, it was about relationship!

The Ungrace of Obeying Rules to Please God Each Day

- "The End of Religion", Bruxy Cavey: "If love guides our hearts, rules become redundant...Jesus lived in such a way as to offend anyone who put their faith in religious rules rather than the way of love."
- Despite O.T. laws – Jesus said all foods were permissible (Mark 7:18-19), divorce shouldn't be easy (Mat. 5:31-32), and good work can be done on the Sabbath (Mat. 12:2).
- It was time for his law to be written in their hearts because they loved him, not in a book because they were afraid of him.
 - ➔ *Why do you live by the rules you do? Do they flow from love for God – or fear that he may not love you if you mess up? And what do you think about other people who don't live by your rules? Does God love those rule-breakers as much as he loves you?*

- *Rom. 6:14 – "you are not under law but under grace."* Obey him because of love, not to get him to love you more than he does already!
- Luke 18 - The sinful tax collector's prayer was pleasing to God, not the rule-abiding religious leader's prayer.

The Ungrace of Needing Justice

- We live in a justice world. "He should get what's coming to him." "Hey, that's not fair." "There should be a law against that."
- Justice is part of our calling, but justice without mercy will corrupt your heart. And it's not primarily how God treats us on earth.
 - Jesus: If someone takes your coat, you're to offer him your shirt as well (Mat. 5:40). That's not justice – it's grace!
- If we primarily think in terms of justice when people hurt us, hurt our loved ones, attack our country, we'll tend to think that this is how God treats sinners – and how God treats us.
- Brennan Manning ("Ragamuffin Gospel"): "The American Church today accepts grace in theory by denies it in practice. . . Too many Christians are living in the house of fear and not in the house of love."
- *1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."*

The Ungrace of Performance Parenting

- ...when parents are more focused on the behavior of their children than their hearts; when rules become more important than relationship; when we think too highly of our responsibility to control our kids instead of acknowledging that we are only one of God's influences in their lives. Maybe you're a performance parent – or you've been parented by one.
- A house full of rules, punishments, yelling, tears is not an environment for God's grace (acceptance/empowerment) to be experienced by them or us. Correct & instruct, yes, but drench in grace!

The Ungrace of Using Will Power to Change

- In sports, business, and school, effort = success.
- But what about personal change? The change God wants for us is by his grace – not human effort. He wants relationship, not human righteousness. He wants to love you and be loved by you - not watch you do the right thing. We must unlearn human effort.
 - *John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."* Connected to Jesus. Dependent on Jesus. Resting in Jesus.
 - *Matthew 11:30 "For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* The answer isn't effort, it's being yoked, connected, tied to Jesus.
- Brennan Manning: "Though lip service is paid to the gospel of grace, many Christians live as if it is only personal discipline and self-denial that will mold the perfect me. The emphasis is on what I do rather than on what God is doing."
- Our "effort" must be directed toward positioning ourselves to receive God's grace by staying near him – daily, hourly, by the minute for all he has for us (Hebrews 12:14-15).