

## Grace Fits All Sizes

**TEXTS:** I Corinthians. 1:26-31 and 6:9-11

In our day the grace of God is not easily grasped because we are programmed to think in terms of earning or deserving what we get. The value of a person is based one's achievement or performance.

Here are some common expressions:

- There's no free lunch.
- You get what you deserve.
- You want money, work for it.
- You want love, earn it.
- You want mercy, show you deserve it.
- We get our righteousness the old fashioned way, we work for it.
- Do unto others, before they do it to you.

One pastor said, "God loves good little boys." I'm glad he loves bad little boys.

The above phrases I believe are from Brennan Manning's fabulous book on grace entitled The Ragamuffin Gospel. He claims that the American church accepts grace in theory, but not in practice. He says that many Christians live in a house of fear instead of a house of love.

Grace was a common word when Jesus ministered on earth. It was used of the kindness shown to one's friends. The New Testament writers took quite a leap by defining grace in terms of the kindness shown to enemies. The greatest demonstration of grace was exhibited on the cross. (Romans 5:8) When we were at our worst, God gave his best. When I was a boy in Sunday School the teacher taught us the definition of grace as unmerited favor. Actually it's more, it is favor shown in the face of antagonism.

I like the acrostic definition: "**God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. Another way of saying it, God's everything for our nothing. I paid nothing for the grace of God that moves God to accept me and assure me that nothing that he knows about me will get him to stop accepting me "nothing I do or fail to do will even tempt him to hold back his grace and give me only what I deserve. Let me read for you a major text on grace. Turn to I Cor. 1:26-31

I look at the human writer of our text as a hero of the word grace. He begins and ends his letters with grace. See I Cor. 1:3-4. Grace is found 155 times in the N.T. and 133 of those times in Paul's writings.

IN THE VERSES READ WE FIND THAT GRACE IS EMBRACED BY THREE LEVELS OF SOCIETY. "GRACE FITS ALL SIZES."

GRACE FITS THE GRACED. v.26, First Paul inventories the make-up of the church by showing that there are some who excel. Paul did not say not any of you. Lady Hamilton, who was An evangelical believer among the English

nobility in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century used to say, that she was saved by the letter because if it had said not any she would not made it, "but the many changed it all.

[The communicator can see some of nobility in Acts 18:8, 17; I Cor. 1:1; Romans 16:23; Acts 17:4 and 34. Then the communicator can research the number of outstanding persons in the history of the church such as Cyrus McCormick, John Wanamaker, J.C. Penny,

Charles Colson, R.G. Le Tourneau, C.S. Lewis, etc. I like also to show gratitude to the outstanding people who have solved many problems and have unlocked secrets that have provided health and convenience to our society. Many projects we enjoy have come from wealthy and wise folk. See Christ's love for the rich young ruler. Mark 10:21. Then there is a second group that grace embraces.

GRACE FITS THE UNGRACED, I Cor. 1:26 I believe most are people without scholarship. As sheep we are foolish or uneducated. The apostles were called "unlearned." How many of you have served as a President of a University? How many of us have set as judge in a court? Have any of you sung in Carnegie Hall? Which of us had developed a cure for a fatal disease? Do we have a Wimbledon winner here? Do you realize how blessed you are to be ungraced? Average? What would our world be without the plodders? The hard working person who regularly shows up to work is so vital to the necessities of our lives.

God's grace brings wisdom from God. The greatest manifestation of that wisdom was shown at the cross. Because of the death of Jesus on our behalf we can have opportunity to serve the Living God. Through faith in Jesus we receive dignity and spiritual gifts. In chapter six of I Corinthians 6 Paul describes the third group touched by grace.

GRACE FITS THE DISGRACED, 6:9-11 I life very much to read those verses from The Message. Eugene Peterson captures so much of the description of the helpless. [The communicator should emphasize that those who will be not inherited eternal life are those who are habitual offenders, those who flaunt their disobedience, those who have determined to be unchanged. It also incumbent to show that we all have addictive tendencies and only by the grace of God can we find the strength to not develop a life style of destruction. But after being accurate with the text, the question should be asked, "Why would a holy God be compassionated toward this group?" My work in the streets of San Francisco taught me that many who roam the streets are victims of abuse. Parents and society seem to have a way of making sinners bigger sinners. A child may have been disgraced at home and flees to be disgraced by strangers. Here the speaker should look at the love of Jesus toward the woman at the well in John 4. She testified, "Come see a man who knows everything about me and he still loves me." Here the preacher will no doubt have converts whose lives have been radically changed from darkness to light.]

Grace fits all sizes of people, the charmed, the ungraced and the disgraced. You recognize which group best defines you. Grace is no stranger to your type. Just as I am without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me and that thou bidst me come to thee, Oh Lamb of God, I come, I come.