

EVERYDAY LIFE

Friday, October 17, 2008

"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given." Ephesians 3:8 NIV

"I don't want what I deserve; I know all too well what that would be."

My thoughts today are about **"amazing grace."**

I have observed that people usually feel best about what they earn. You feel best about the things for which you know you worked; you deserve the fruit of your labor; you've earned them. Comment is often made of someone having *"paid their dues,"* meaning they deserve the recognition or reward that has come their way. Even negatively, the principle holds true. People, with some delight speak of another *"getting what they deserve . . . who have it coming."*

The Gospel turns all that you feel about fairness upside down and inside out, and can leave you squirming a little, struggling to accept the free gift that God chooses to offer to people who have done nothing on their own to earn such grace. You want to earn it, do something deserving of it, or at least be allowed some possibility of repaying it - but to do any of that would disallow the very nature of grace. **You cannot earn it by your works.** Good deeds will not buy it. Clean living does not produce it. Paul more than any other, knew and wrote of grace, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is a gift from God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."* Ephesians 2:8-9. See Philippians 3:4-10.

If a friend chose to give me a gift, small or large, but I **refused to accept it unless they let me pay for it; wouldn't that be ungracious?** But don't we do that with God all the time? Refusing His grace, trying to do better, be better on our own? Consider this. If God only gave you what you deserve - if life only allowed you what you had duly earned - life for you would be much less, and eternity would already be a badly settled fact.

I have heard people complain that they didn't receive from God what they felt they deserved, and have probably felt a bit of that myself at some time of pain or disappointment. **I don't want what I deserve; I know all too well what that would be.** I want anything God in mercy and grace is willing to give me because of His Son, Jesus. See 2 Corinthians 8:9/ John 1:14,16-18.

David, who knew well of his awful sin (See Psalm 32:1-5/ 51:1-5), could confidently say, *"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."* Psalm 23:6. That's grace, amazing grace. I would describe *"goodness"* as **the times and ways when God gives you what you could never deserve,** and *"mercy"* as **the times and ways that God does not give you what you do deserve!** I don't know about you, but I cry out only for goodness and mercy - **God's "amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me."**

I think it is wonderful that the final words in the Bible are these: *"Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen!"* Revelation 22:21. What more needs be said?

My prayer today is that you be amazed by grace everyday, and amaze others with it.

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