

Grace, Law and Repentance

Have you ever been in a situation when everything seemed hopeless? You might have been in that place a long time with no one who could or would help you. You've given up all hope and life resorted to a mere existence in a pitiful state. Maybe you're in that state right now. Or maybe you were in that state and you've come through it and don't quite know what happened to get you out.

A similar thing happened to a man who Jesus came across in Jerusalem.

John 5: 1 – 16

1) Being in a state of complete helplessness

- Jesus came to the pool called Bethesda where He came across a man who had been an invalid for 38 years.
- People who were disabled used to lie at the pool waiting for the water in the pool to stir and when it did they would rush to get in and believed that the first one in would be healed.
 - We aren't sure whether people actually got healed by getting into the water when the water stirred but someone who has been in a helpless situation for so long can easily believe in something that will give him a sense of hope.
 - It is good to have hope but when our hope is in something that can easily fail us it is a dangerous thing
 - These people had put their entire hope on getting into the water of the pool of Bethesda to be healed.
 - Others put their hope on doctors
 - Some put their hope in the generosity of people
 - And in the banks or government services
 - Religion
- When you were in a state of helplessness and couldn't get out of it what did you put your hope in?
 - Where was your sense of security?
- Are you in a state of helplessness now and can't see your way out?
- Sometimes God allows us to get into such a state that His absolute grace may be revealed to us.
 - We are so used to doing things for ourselves that God has to bring us to a place of complete dependency on Him so that His power can be manifest in weakness.
 - Afterwards we will know that if it weren't for the grace of God our lives would always be in a state of helplessness.

2) Jesus heals by his grace

- Jesus went to the man who was disabled and asked him if he wanted to get well.
 - This seemed like it was a rhetorical question or could have even seemed like sarcasm to some.
 - However it is important to know that a person wants to be made well – or get out of their state of helplessness.

- After so many years they might have found some sense of security in their helpless condition and don't want long term help. They just want pity.
- Many people living on the streets, alcoholics and drug addicts are like this.
- But others in other seemingly more respectable helpless situations can also find security in their helpless situation. ‘
- It is possible that the man lived off begging and wouldn't be able to beg again if he was made well.
- Instead of giving Jesus a straightforward answer he pointed Jesus to his helplessness in getting into the pool to get healed.
 - Jesus saw his unspoken need for help.
 - This man had never asked Jesus for help and he didn't even know who Jesus was so he didn't believe that Jesus could help him
- The grace of God in Jesus was such that Jesus approached the man without the man requesting His help
 - Without the man believing that Jesus could do anything for him Jesus healed him.
 - Jesus was sensitive to the man's need
- Why did Jesus heal the one man at the pool and not the others?
 - Does this make him a graceless person?
 - No! Jesus didn't have to heal anyone but in his grace He reached out to a man who was disabled without anyone to help him and was helpless for 38 years.
- We were all lost and helpless in our sins but God, in His grace reached out and saved us in Jesus.
- The fact that we are saved and others aren't does not make God graceless. He didn't have to save anyone. We need to be thankful that he saved us.

3) A legalistic response

- When the man was healed Jesus had told him to pick up his bed and walk.
 - Jesus had told him to do something that was impossible for him to do prior to his healing.
 - In picking up his mat and walking the power of Jesus was being testified to as many people would have recognised the man as having been an invalid for 38 years
 - If we see someone who had been lame walking or a blind person seeing what effect would that have on us?
 - We would wonder what happened and even enquire to how this was possible especially if the healing was immediate.
- The Jews did not enquire as to how he was healed they or did not even comment on the fact that he was healed
 - They were so legalistic in their interpretation of the law that they completely missed an amazing demonstration of the power of God in their midst.
- Let us not be legalistic in dealing with people who have experienced the grace of God but rather deal with them with the grace that God deals with them.
 - Jesus knew the law as well as the Jews did but He commanded the man to carry his mat on a Sabbath
 - He was more interested in the man's welfare than a legalistic interpretation of the law.

- Have you experienced the grace of God then someone comes and crushes you under the weight of legalistic expectations?
- Knowing God's grace in our lives ought to make us grace givers – people who have a lot of grace on others.
 - A person of grace isn't judgemental or cynical when others aren't perfect or make mistakes but is patient with them

4) A need for repentance

- Grace did not overlook sin or give permission to continue in sin
- Grace is given to stop sinning and live a life of righteousness – a life worthy of God.
- Jesus told the man to stop sinning or something worse might happen to him
 - This seem like a strange statement considering that the man was an invalid for 38 years and didn't have much opportunity to go out into the world and actively commit sin.
 - Jesus knew that this man was a sinner like everyone else and given the opportunity he would commit sin.
 - What was worse than his condition as an invalid for so many years would be for him to die in his sin and face the final judgement without having come to Jesus to have his sins washed away by His blood.
 - This man had received grace healing without knowing who Jesus was but after Jesus had told him to stop sinning he knew who Jesus was.
- Have you received God's grace in some way yet still need to repent of something in your life?