

God's Grace ~ Part 20

"Perhaps there is no word in the Bible more precious than Grace."

~ Rick Countryman, Senior Pastor, Big Valley Grace Community Kehilah
Modesto, Ca.

"The Garments of God's Grace ~ Part B"

In my last post, we began to look at three of the garments of God's Grace – gratitude, contentment and humility. In this post, we will continue with the garments of patience and forgiveness.

The key passage for this mini-series is: ***"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with feelings of compassion and with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; if anyone has a complaint against someone else, forgive him. Indeed, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive. Above all these, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together perfectly."*** (Colossians 3:12-14)

Patience

In his "garments of grace" list in Colossians 3:12-14, Sha'ul put *patience* (***"bear with one another"***) and *forgiveness* together. These two character traits should certainly be hallmarks of a person living by God's transforming grace. Patience literally means "to put up with" or as translated in the KJV~ "longsuffering".

For example, Yeshua said in Matthew 17:17, ***"Perverted people, without any trust! How long will I be with you? How long must I put up with you?"*** (emphasis added). Sha'ul spoke similarly when he wrote to the Corinthians, ***"I would like you to bear with me in a little foolishness — please do bear with me!"*** (2 Corinthians 11:1, emphasis added)

So when Sha'ul said to ***"bear with one another,"*** he was saying, *"put up with one another,"* or as we would say, *"be patient with one another."* When we use "be patient" in this manner, we are saying to put up with or overlook the faults and thoughtless acts of others.

There are two ways we can put up with the faults and thoughtless acts of other people. One way is politely but grudgingly. A person says, *"Excuse my lateness,"* and we smile and say, *"Of course,"* while inwardly we are saying, *"Why can't you be on time like I always am?"* Such an attitude is born out of pride and is obviously not the way God intends that we put up with or be patient with one another.

The other way is to recognize that God has to constantly put up with our faults and failures. Not only are we faulty and thoughtless in our relationships with one another, more importantly, we are faulty and thoughtless in our relationship with God. We do not honor or revere Him as we should. But God is patient with us because of His Grace. And to the extent that we consciously live in His Grace, we will be patient with others. In fact, the definition of patience in our common use implies the latter, a gracious way of putting up with the faults of others.

In Ephesians 4:2 Sha'ul urges us to ***"always be humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love."*** The basis for our patience with one another is love. As Peter said in 1 Peter 4:8, ***"More than anything, keep loving each other actively; because love covers many sins."*** Love not only covers over a multitude of sins but also a multitude of faults in one another. But where do we get such a love? John answers this in 1 John 4:19: ***"We ourselves love now because He loved us first."***

Forgiveness

Sha'ul said we are to go beyond being patient with one another; we are also to *forgive* each other. Forgiveness differs from patience in that it has to do with real wrongs committed against us. Patience should be our response to unintentional actions due to the faults or carelessness of another. Forgiveness should be our response to the intentional or provocative acts of another, the instances when they attempt to or actually do harm us in some way.

In Colossians 3:13, Sha'ul said, ***"Bear with one another; if anyone has a complaint against someone else, forgive him. Indeed, just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive."*** Sha'ul's language seems to take for granted that such grievances will occur. As Believers, all of us are still far from the Messiah-likeness we would like to have. So we not only offend our fellow Believers unwittingly through our faults and failures, but we also sometimes offend deliberately. We need forgiveness not only from God but from one another. And we need to forgive one another as God forgave us. We know from Matthew 18:22 that Yeshua instructs us to forgive ***"seventy times seven."*** In other words, don't keep score. (Who in their right mind would keep track of all four hundred and nine times that they forgave one person?)

Many Believers have not admitted their own total, permanent spiritual bankruptcy? They do not recognize the infinite extent of God's Grace to them. They still see themselves as basically "good," and because of that, they expect everyone else to be "good" as well, especially in relationship to them. Because they do not recognize their own continued bankruptcy before God, they insist that everyone else pay his own debts.

But the Messianic lifestyle recognizes his own spiritual bankruptcy. He sees the vast contrast between his sins against God of "several million dollars" and his neighbor's sins against him of only a "few dollars." And because of this, he both understands and responds to Sha'ul's instruction, *"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."*

What Is Real Forgiveness? ¹

Real forgiveness is not a cheap term you just throw out that instantly makes everybody feel better. That's not real forgiveness. The Bible says real forgiveness is four things:

- 1. Forgiveness is remembering how much you've been forgiven.** ***"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Yeshua God forgave you"*** (Ephesians 4:32 NIV). This is the starting point for genuine forgiveness. If you don't feel forgiven, you won't want to forgive anybody else. If you're hard on yourself, you're going to be hard on others. But the more grace you receive from God, the more gracious you're going to be to others. The more forgiven you feel by God, the more forgiving you'll be toward others.
- 2. Forgiveness is relinquishing your right to get even.** Romans 12:19 says, ***"Never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for he has said that he will repay those who deserve it"*** (LB). Life is not fair, but one day God's going to settle the score. He's going to right the wrongs. So, who can get better justice - you or God?
- 3. Forgiveness is responding to evil with good.** The Bible says in Luke 6:27-28, ***"Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you"*** (NIV). How can you tell when you've really forgiven somebody? When you can look at that person's hurt and not just your own and pray for God to bless him or her.

¹ Based upon Rick Warren's Daily Hope, March 26, 2014

You ask, *"How could I ever do that for the person who's hurt me?"* You can't unless you allow the love of God to penetrate your life. Only the love of God can help you do something like that.

- 4. Forgiveness is repeating the process as long as necessary. *"Peter came to him and asked, 'Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?'" (Jewish law said you had to forgive a person three times, so Peter doubled it and threw one in for good measure.) "No, not seven times," Yeshua replied, 'but seventy times seven!"***
(Matthew 18:21-22 NLT)

How long do you have to keep forgiving a person? As long as it takes. You have to keep forgiving that person until the pain stops and the desire to get revenge goes away.

Forgive Because You Are Forgiven ²

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." (Matthew 6:15 NIV)

I have no doubt that many of you are carrying some deep wounds that you've carried for months, maybe even years. When you think about that person who hurt you, it's still as fresh as if it happened this morning. The pain is still there, and you're still filled with resentment.

You say, *"Why in the world should I forgive that person who hurt me so much? You have no idea how much they hurt me. Why should I offer grace to that person?"*

You ought to do it for three reasons:

- 1. You need to be gracious to others and forgive those who've hurt you because God has been gracious to you.**

You will never have to forgive anyone else more than Yeshua has already forgiven you. You should consider that you haven't always gotten what you deserved, either. God has been gracious with you. Now be gracious with others.

- 2. You need to forgive others because the alternative is bitterness.**

Scientists tell us that resentment is the unhealthiest emotion there is. It always hurts you more than anybody else! Resentment will not change the past, and it won't solve the problem. It doesn't even make you feel better. In fact, it makes you feel worse.

The Bible says in Hebrews 12:15, *"Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if he does there can very easily spring up in him a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others"* (Phillips).

- 3. You need to show grace to and forgive others because God expects you to do it.**

Matthew 6:15 says, *"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"* (NIV). Yeshua says we cannot receive what we are unwilling to give. If you say, "I could never forgive

² Based upon Rick Warren's Daily Hope, March 27, 2014

that person," then I hope you never sin. If you just don't feel like doing it, do it anyway, because it's the right thing to do.

The reason why some of you have a hard time forgiving is because you don't feel forgiven. Would you pray this prayer of liberation and freedom in your heart?

"Dear Yeshua, you know I've been hurt by others. You know that my resentment has made me act in ways that have been unreasonable and unhelpful and unhealthy. I need your power to release and forgive those who've hurt me so I can stop letting them control me. Would you please replace my hurt with the peace of Yeshua? God, I realize that I've hurt a lot of other people with my habits and my bad decisions and my hang-ups. Would you please forgive me for the way I've hurt others? Help me to make a list of those I've harmed and in the right way at the right time to humbly seek to make amends. Yeshua, I want to refocus my life on you. I want to face the future courageously with love and peace in my heart. Would you replace my resentment with your love, my bitterness with your grace? Thank you for your graciousness to me. Thank you for forgiving me for the things that I've done wrong. In Yeshua's name. Amen."