

The Marks Of A Disciple Grace

Eph 4:22-32

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

KJV

What one word describes the theme of Christianity, what would it be?

I think Paul would say Grace. Paul uses the word 99 times in his 14 letters.

Paul uses the word Holy 53 times and many of those are associated with the personal name for a member of the trinity. In four letters, Paul never uses the word Holy.

Paul uses the word love 78 times.

Why Grace? In spite of the fact that humanity has rebelled against God, God had compassion on us. Because of this compassion, God gave his only begotten son to save us from His judgment for sin.

While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Rom 5:8

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

KJV

Love motivated God. Grace defines what God did that revealed His love!

He did not give us what we deserve. He gave us eternal life instead. What a price He paid to give us life.

Grace is giving others a gift they do not deserve.

It is so important that our Christian faith is based on grace. It is so important that we respond to the sins of our brother and sisters with grace...

Eph 4:22-32

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

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If our faith is not based on grace, we will be like the Pharisees in the way we judge the sins and the failures of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

There are sins and there failures.

- A sin is the transgression of God's law.
- A failure is a failed attempt to reach a particular goal.

For example a sin would be disobeying one of the ten commandments.

A failure would be...

- A businessman who has a business that loses all of its assets and is forced to close.
- A woman who has a marriage that ends in divorce
- A parent who has a child that rebels.
- A pastor who has a church that disbands

It is true that our sins can contribute to one or more of these failures. It is also true these failures in the lives of our brothers and sisters can occur when a person is innocent of any sin that would cause the failure.

If our faith is not based on grace, we will be like the Pharisees in the way we judge the failures of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Instead of obeying Ephesians 4:29...

- We will immediately assume that those who fail have sinned.
- We will look for ways to support our conclusion.
- We will call things that are lawful sinful.

A person whose faith is not based on grace is always looking for something a cause to failure that the other person can control. This leads to what many in the church call legalism. Legalism is turning fence laws for some into God's law for everyone.

- We will feel the freedom to share our judgment of our brother with others.
We will share with others the sins or the errors in judgment we our brother has committed.

On the other hand, if our faith is based on grace and we follow Eph. 4:29, it will look like this....

- We will give our brothers and sisters who fail the benefit of the doubt.
- We will look for ways to serve those who have failed.
- We will only call those things that are unlawful sinful.
- We will only give a good report to others about the one who has failed.
Thru our relationship with the one who has failed, if we discover they are at fault, we will only share with them the sins we believe they have committed.

Those whose faith is based on grace will be an example of loyalty and unconditional love to the one who has failed. They will normally earn the trust of the one who has failed.

When is it right to discuss with others the sins of the one who has failed?

If we have been like the Pharisee to the one who has failed, we have not earned the right to reprove the one who has failed because we have failed to show them the grace that we have all received!

The man who is like the Pharisee feels the freedom to personally reprove others and judge the motives of others before he has responded to their failures in a graceful way.

It is so arrogant to the brother or the sister who has failed. Even if those who have failed are mature enough to listen and avoid reacting outwardly, when they have the opportunity, those who have failed will distance themselves from those who are arrogant. If people do not vote with their hands, they vote with their feet.

This has been my greatest failure as a father! For some men it is their greatest failure as a husband! For some men it is their greatest failure in the church!

The failure of men to respond to the failures of others in a graceful way is the greatest cause of division and disunity in the family and in the church!

Is your faith based on God's grace? Or are you like the Pharisee?

We can fall from grace in any relationship. We have this warning in the epistle of Hebrews.

Heb 12:15

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

KJV

Bitterness is best exposed by the absence of grace!

If you are not responding with grace, you are bitter whether or not you acknowledge it to God and to others.

Bitterness is normally associated with envy. That is why Esau is mentioned in Hebrew 12.

Heb 12:15-16

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

KJV

The main evidence that you are bitter is failing to deal with another's failure in a graceful way.

Esau eventually repented and found a measure of the grace of God even though he lost the blessing of his birthright. The evidence of this was the grace that Esau showed his brother Jacob when Jacob returned to his father's land from the house of Laban. Esau had sworn that he would kill Jacob for the way that Jacob had deceived him and stolen from him. Esau not only did not kill Jacob but he blessed him instead.

If the grace of God can change a man like Esau, it can change a man like you.

Are there relationships in your life in which you have been like the Pharisee?

- You immediately assume that those who fail have sinned.
- You look for ways to support our conclusion.
- You call things that are lawful sinful.
- You feel the freedom to share our judgment of our brother with others.

Let's turn from any bitterness today. Let's repent of the envy that has caused our bitterness. Let's base our relationship with God on His grace and extend that grace to others in a graceful way. Let's make things right with those that we have mistreated and injured by our graceless conduct.