

The Wondrous Grace of God

I had a dream last night that really brought home to me the meaning of Grace; and showed me how God has accepted me into His family and made me equal to a son. He has loved me and cared for me like a son in spite of my sinfulness. And He has done that for all of us. So with every song we sang in Church this morning tears poured out of my eyes.

The setting of the dream is the shop where I worked for 24 years building furniture. The characters are my boss, my brother, me, and the powers that be.

It was my brother's very first day on the job. He was thrilled to be off the unemployment list, finally. It was a wonderful feeling to see the production rolling through the shop and know that the company was blessed with prosperity. He thought, "I will just settle back and work here for a lifetime."

I had just the day before talked my boss into hiring my brother. He was happy to do that on my recommendation because he respected me. He was thinking, "If he's anything like his brother he'll make a good employee."

As my brother worked he thought of all that needed to be done to his house, which had been falling into disrepair for a long while. He decided, "First I could put new trim around all the windows. There's lots of lumber here and it wouldn't take much to just make some trim." So he came and asked me to help him out and get some trim made.

Wanting to please my brother I got the material ready. We designed a pleasantly shaped molding; and set up the molder machine. We were busily engaged in feeding the strips of wood through the molder when I spotted my boss across the shop looking at us. Without glancing back at him, not knowing if he really saw my activity, I immediately walked to the nearest door and took my exit.

Some minutes later he caught up with me and began discussing company business. We walked together through the shop making plans for the work that was soon to come. When we passed the molder he asked about the load of material my brother and I had been working on. I said, "Yes, I'm sorry. I did that. I used company material, on company time, for a home project."

We continued to walk through the shop together discussing company business. He never said another word about that incident. He was kind to me. He gave me things. He allowed me to carry things and do things for him. As we walked I wondered, "What does he think? Isn't he mad at me? Why doesn't he say something? What would I do with me if I were he? I surely deserve to be fired, or punished in some way. I can't guarantee that I won't do that again. Did he just forgive me? Isn't he going to do anything? I would probably do that only for a family member. He's treating me like a family member. He's treating me like one of his sons. I have never met anyone capable of doing that. Only God can love like that." Our walk continued, flowing into months and years. But he never mentioned that incident again.

As we walk with God, that's what happens. God is eager to forgive. He wants to show His loving-kindness, His holiness, the riches of His mercy and His grace. *"And the law came in that the transgression might increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Rm. 5:20-21

Grace is giving us what we don't deserve, and not giving us what we do deserve. It takes wondrous love to be able to do that. My boss had confronted me with my sin; he didn't just ignore it. God sometimes confronts me with my sin too; and after that He never mentions it again. He blesses me continually as if it never happened. In my working life this isn't the first time something like that ever happened. That incident was a dream, but this is reality: God has covered for me many times, blessing me whether I was right or wrong. I don't mean to say that God will cover up and help anyone do evil. And the things I did weren't that blatantly and openly done. But when there was no work going through the shop, and we were standing around with nothing to do sometimes I would work on home projects.

One time it was Friday at the end of the day. My boss was passing out the checks. I was working on the feet for my Solar Model, trying to get them edge-sanded before quitting time. When my boss went to hand me the check, my hands were full of the little parts I was working on. I fumbled nervously: dropping some, picking them up, dropping more, and making a big ruckus like Dick Van Dyke or Lucille Ball. In spite of all the commotion, my boss never lowered his eyes off my face to see what I was doing with my hands. My former employer is not stupid or ignorant. He knows what is going on in his shop at all times. But he chose to overlook some of the things he saw, for our benefit. God does that too; and God can do that through whomsoever He chooses. *"In the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed."* Rm. 3:25

How could my employer overlook wrongs done to him when he doesn't even believe in God, and we who do know God sometimes can't accomplish that? God can accomplish anything in our lives, even through non-believers. And He can use those situations to teach us His ways. In the dream the forgiveness and grace that were extended to me made me want to do only good for my employer from now on. That's what God's kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and grace does for us too. *"...the kindness of God leads us to repentance."* Rm. 2:4 When we forgive those who have done us wrong, it can make them want to do good for us too. Wouldn't that be more profitable than holding a grudge? I want to always live by the wondrous grace of God.

by Wes Allen
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