

Something to Pray About

April 2012 – Cindy Sears

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. —John 1:16-17 NKJV

Grace—Who Needs It?

Grace – (in Christian belief) unmerited favor of God (Oxford American Dictionary of Current English)

From the Greek word – charis, from the root word, chairō, which means “to be cheerful” or “calmly happy.” (Strong’s Concordance; Vine’s Concise Dictionary of the Bible)

As Christians, we receive unmerited favor or regard from God. Because of what Christ did, we receive forgiveness freely—no charge, no work involved. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NKJV) To receive a gift, you do have to accept it—but that is all. A gift freely given by someone we have no right to expect it from leads to joy. God bestows His favor, His regard upon us. We respond with joy and thankfulness.

So, with a building full of grateful and joyful people, the Christian church or home should be the happiest place to be on earth—right? No other religion or philosophy or belief in this world offers forgiveness for free. And we all need forgiveness, don’t we? Everyone has done something that they regret—a misspoken word, a rash or stupid act—sin, against God and man—from little white lies to malicious gossip; from a lustful thought to adultery; from taking a tiny piece of chalk at school to cheating on our taxes; from an angry retort to murder. But our joy is tainted by our failure to believe that God really does offer His regard for free. Even Christian churches fall into the trap of thinking that people must earn God’s favor—by attending church all the time, tithing, confessing to a priest, good works, or just being good in general. But who doesn’t miss church once in a while? Who doesn’t go through a rough financial time and withhold the tithe? Who doesn’t fail to speak up when someone is belittling Christ or the Church? Who doesn’t stumble in their walk with the Lord and sin?

So, who needs grace? We all do, and most of us need it daily. And Christianity is where grace is to be found. And Christians are the ones who ought to be living it out loud to everyone else. No, we don’t wink at sin; but we don’t condemn the sinner with our words or works. We bring them in with love. We teach them from God’s word. We pray for God to change them into the wonderful new creatures that only the Holy Spirit can make them become.

I remember once that I spoke up during a Bible study here at Ebenezer that the parents of Zahra Baker, the little girl whose dismembered remains were found in our community, needed our prayers; because they were still alive and could, therefore, be led to Christ. The silence was almost deafening after that statement. Does Elisha Baker deserve grace? No. Do I deserve grace? No. Does Billy Graham deserve grace? No. Do you deserve grace? No. But we all need grace, don’t we?

Maybe our sins are not as great as those of Elisha Baker. Maybe our good works are not as wonderful as those of Billy Graham. Yet, in God’s eyes we are all precious enough for His only begotten Son to die for

us. Should we, who have received the gift of grace, refuse to show grace to others? How else are we to let them know how much God loves them? How else do we tell them the Good News? “Freely, freely you have received, freely, freely give.” (Carol Owens, Hymn #389)

“Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15:10 NKJV)

Let us joy in the Lord’s grace, and help the Holy Spirit by joyfully being gracious to those who need to know Jesus. As Robert Mullinax asked in our Sunday school class, “How many of you were saved before you came to church?” Let’s bring them in; let’s let them in—and turn them over to God to save and to change.

Suggested reading:

What’s So Amazing About Grace? By Philip Yancey, c1997