

ACPC Bible Study; Topical Series

3 Grace: Exodus 33:12-23

Introduction

In the Bible, the word "grace" means the unmerited favour of God toward humans. We do not deserve, nor can we ask for, grace. It is freely given. This idea also occurs in the phrase "favour in your (i.e., God's) sight" or "in the eyes of the Lord." Moses finds "favour" in God's eyes 5 times in 6 verses. God shows kindness to and cherishes his people. In verse 18, Moses then asks to see the glory of God. This is the same as asking to see God himself. If I went to the White House in Washington and said, "may I see President Obama?" I would be laughed at. However, God knows Moses "by name" (v.17) and spoke to him like a friend (v.11) But there are limits. Moses may not see God's face. Some things are just too good and are just too much to take in. God knows how much to show Moses. It may be strange that God has a face and hands. However, the point is not that God has an actual face and hands. Rather, God is making himself visible in a way that Moses can understand. He makes himself known in ways we can understand. That is through Jesus Christ.

Notes

1. Favour: from the Latin, *favor* meaning to "show kindness to", "cherish".
2. Glory: In the Bible, the word glory is the outward manifestation of the inner reality of God. When Jesus was born we saw is the Glory of the Father, eg: Luke 2:9

Questions

1. What do you think this passage tells us about God's grace?
2. Can sometimes news be so good, or so bad, that people are unable to accept it?

Grace and Mercy

There is a subtle difference between grace and mercy. and they are opposite sides of the same coin. Recently, 2 people were sentenced to 17 years for killing a baby boy named Moko. The judge said there was no reason to show either *grace* or *mercy*. Mercy means withholding judgment and punishment that I deserve; grace means giving a blessing or good that I do not deserve. Sometimes a judge will change the sentence from murder to manslaughter, if the person admits guilt. This brings lesser punishment. However, no judge says "you are guilty and must be punished. However, I will be merciful to you and not impose any punishment at all. I will be gracious to you and take the punishment on myself. That is what Jesus did. It is hard to grasp!!

1. Do you think sentences in New Zealand court are too light? Under what circumstances can we say that someone who is guilty should be shown mercy?
2. In what ways can we "find favour in God's eyes", so that "God is pleased with us?"

Read Ephesians 2:1-9

In this passage, mercy and grace are linked together and are the expression of God's love. Jesus is the expression of God's love and carries that love to us. Grace and mercy *together* bring life. In that new life we find love and "salvation". The word "salvation" comes from Latin and means "health". To be 'saved' means to be healthy in mind, body and soul. We have a healthy relationship with God and others. A body with a tumour cannot get rid of the tumour by itself. A surgeon needs to cut it out. The person needs to allow the doctor to operate on him or her. If they do what the doctor says, then then they can get well. We are not saved by ourselves (v.9). We need to accept God's grace and mercy operating in our lives. However, Paul adds: we are God's workmanship. He is creating in us a new body so that we can show grace love and mercy to others. God is not interested in "couch potatoes". He wants to create a pleasing Christian community which reflects his glory.

