

Home Group study: week beginning 21st February 2021

Limitless Grace Part 2

Following on from last week's study, how have people got on with memorising scripture?
Would anyone like to recite a piece of scripture they have memorised?

Read: 1 Timothy 1: 12-17

The Lord shows three aspects of his character to Paul in these verses 14 and 16. What are those aspects of his character?

Read: Exodus 32: 1, 7-10; 34: 5-7

The context of this reading is this. Moses has been up Mount Sinai and God has given him the Ten Commandments. Moses has spent 40 days and 40 nights being taught by God the detail of the law. When he comes down again the Israelite people have assumed, as he's been away for so long, Moses is dead and God has abandoned them. So they make a false god: a golden calf. God is so full of anger that in 32: 11-14 Moses has pleaded with God to spare the people. God relents. Moses is so angry he smashes the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments have been written. God calls him back up Mount Sinai with some new tablets.

Compare 34: 6 and the first half of 7 with the 1 Timothy passage above. What similarities do we notice? How do you think God's forgiveness and the punishment shown in the second part of Exodus 34: 7 work together?

Understanding

In his well-known textbook 'Systematic Theology' Wayne Grudem says that Grace, Mercy and Patience can be seen either as three separate attributes of God or 'as specific aspects of His Goodness'. From these passages how would you say there is a difference between Grace, Mercy and Patience? How would you define each of them?

Wayne Grudem goes on to define them as follows:

- God's *mercy* means God's goodness towards those in misery and distress.
- God's *grace* means God's goodness towards those who deserve only punishment.
- God's *patience* means God's goodness in withholding of punishment toward those who sin over a period time

Would you agree with those definitions? Are mercy, grace and patience separate attributes of God or all aspects of God's goodness?

Looking now at the 1 Timothy passage, why does Paul suggest God showed him mercy? Paul was a great theologian and, he tells us in Galatians 1: 14, he 'was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.' Why does he now describe himself as acting in 'ignorance and unbelief'?

Do you think Saul's 'ignorance and unbelief' were a reason for God to single him out for special treatment, or do you think those are words that can be applied to anyone to who is yet to receive God's grace and mercy? And do you think God singled out Paul because of his great knowledge of the word and his zeal, even though he had been misdirecting them?

Application

Paul's old life was all about trying to live by the letter of the law and impose that law on other people. Do you think that in the grace of Jesus he found a better life? Think about the hardships that new life led him into when considering that question.

Do we have a tendency to slip back into the law? Why do you think that is?

Do we need to be so knowledgeable about scripture and as zealous as the young Saul was for God to show us his grace and use us in his service?

Finally, in Romans 5: 20 Paul says: 'The law was brought in so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more'. Then a few verses later, in Romans 6: 1-2 he goes on to say: 'Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?

By no means!'

Surely seeing grace increasing is a good thing? And if we are under grace not law, surely we can do just what we like? Discuss...!