

Grace: Precious Gifts along the Trail

Grace—part 5

July 28, 2019

An allegory. The traveler began his journey as a confident young man, full of life, full of idealism, and full of dreams. The way through the glen was scented with the aroma of fresh flowers, rich, colorful blooms, bees feeding on nectar, and the sun shining in a bright blue sky. He filled his canteen along the stream. Berries were easy pickin' to supplement his lunch. For days and weeks and years he traveled this way. Oh, there were occasional rain storms, a lightning strike, and a few bee stings. He was a merry traveler.

As the years progressed he could not tell if he was nearing his destination or not. The landscape did not look like it had in his mind. Hills were steeper than he imagined. Some days were hot, some days not enough food. Longer stretches of travel.

On the horizon were mountains. No one told him about mountains. There were steep, some places downright treacherous. He had no skill as a mountain climber. He did not wear mountain boots. Snow fell. He was cold. The wind was blustery. He felt chilled to the bone.

When he was about to give up and go from where he had come, he discovered a back pack at his camp. He opened it and inside were seven things.

As we've learned in our series on grace, grace has a number of different usages. This week, we'll look at some of the "gifts" of grace.

DAY 1: A scroll containing stunning news

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. The traveler realizes he's lost his way. Not only does he not know the way forward, he doesn't know his way back home. In despair he looks in the backpack and sees an old scroll. He unrolls it and reads it.

2. His name is at the top. He sees that he is wanted by the authorities for suspicion of tax evasion against his business partner. He thought he had closed every possible door of discovery. He was wrong. Now, he dared not go home, even if he could.

3. He reads further down the scroll. He sees his business partner was interviewed. To his utter astonishment, the business partner paid off the tax lien. The debt was paid. In addition, the business partner appealed to his lost business partner with stunning news. The criminal suit was dropped by the government, and that there would be no civil suit against him!

4. In a similar manner this is what God has done for us. We have been "**justified.**" We have been declared "just!" Think of it this way: "just-as-if-I'd" never sinned!

5. How did we gain such a verdict? Look back at Romans 5:1.

6. If you have given your heart to Jesus as Lord and savior of your life, you, too have been justified! What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: A golden key

*Romans 5:2 ...**through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace** in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*

1. As a fugitive from the law, he had come to believe that he would also be on the run, always a traveler.

2. What was the meaning of this key? A key? To what?

3. There was an envelope attached to the key. He opened the envelope. He unfolded a single piece of paper.

4. The note read, “Dear Traveler,

As you know I discovered your past deeds. Your past deeds fell upon me. I paid the entire debt owed. I paid it, partly because Someone else had paid a debt I owed that was far more significant than the debt you owed.

Out of gratitude to the One who paid my enormous debt, a debt I could never have repaid, I have become a close friend of the One who paid my debt. I told Him your story. He offered to pay the debt you owed, as well.

Further, He purchased a home for you in the city to which you are traveling. You will no longer be a fugitive from the law, constantly on the run, constantly looking over your shoulder.

You have a home! The key will not only give you access to your home, but it also gives you access to the amazing One who paid your debt and mine. He wants to meet you, and treat you to a scrumptious banquet when you arrive.

You’ll want to look Him up!

5. The grace God offers us not only deals with our sin dilemma. But grace also opens the door to have access in fellowship with God.

6. He wants fellowship with you. He desires to enjoy your company. He delights in you. How does this strike you?

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: A flute

*Romans 5:2 ...through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And **we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.***

1. The word “rejoice” is the Greek word “Kaukaomia.” It means to boast. The idea is having a celebration that is “unhinged,” from the heart.

2. The third item in the back pack was a flute. It also came with a note attached.

3. Dear Traveler,

It’s likely that for many years you have shuffled along in the shadows, quietly, perhaps with a sense of dread about your past.

All that is now changed. You need never look back on your past with shame, at least as the world defines shame. The glory of God, the glory of forgiveness won at the cross has changed all that. All of life is in front of you.

Today, you will learn the value of singing, of rejoicing.

At first this will seem quite odd to you. After all, for years all of us have “lived” on complaining, grumbling, moping and sulking.

But you won’t be singing just any song. The songs you sing will be about the (1) **hope** that awaits us because of what our Benefactor has done for us. But over time, you will also come to sing about the Benefactor himself! His character is matchless, and glorious, above all wonder.

Singing can touch the deepest parts of your soul like nothing else.

Though you can learn to play the flute in the back pack, it will also play songs of its own chord. Sing along, from your heart.

4. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: A walking stick and Lucy's cordial

Romans 5:3 ...Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.

1. The traveler looked into his back pack and found two more items. The first was a walking stick. The second item was an old silver flask with a strange title scratched into the surface of the metal. It said, "Lucy's cordial."

Dear Traveler,

As you've noticed, the longer you've traveled the more difficult the terrain. You once walked in meadows, and among spring flowers.

You've walked in sunny days and watched the birds migrating overhead.

But the way ahead will become more difficult. You will face climbs you won't think you can make. You will face wild animals that will make you fear for your life.

At times the whole trek will seem overwhelming.

The walking stick is no ordinary walking stick. It was designed for you, by name. The Maker knew you would need this particular walking stick. It is imperative that you learn to use the walking stick, to lean on its strength. By the time you reach your destination you will have discovered a noticeable limp to your steps. This is a good thing.

You have also been given a silver flask. It's previous owner was a girl named Lucy Pevensie. You will not recognize the name unless you're read The Chronicles of Narnia.

When you become bone-weary, or when you sprain an ankle or break a leg, whether you have become wounded by a mountain lion or mauled by a bear, pour the cordial in the flask to heal your body or your heart.

You will find the cordial indispensable along the way.

Romans 5:5 And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

2. Do you relate to the walking stick? Have you accepted the nature of depending on God that is to be our way of life? What is your usual attitude about depending on God?

3. God's love is the cordial that can be poured out in our greatest times of need.

4. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: A magical map

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

¹⁰ For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Dear Traveler,

At times you've been lost. When you looked to the heavens in despair, the heavens saw and led you ahead, silently, with no fanfare.

At times this journey has been confusing. You haven't known which way to go. You knew you could not go back, but you wondered, "Where AM I going?!"

Open the map. It is a living map.

You can see where you are on the map. You can see where you've been. You can also see the missteps you've taken, rebellious steps that led you far away from the trail. Do you see some of them on the map?

You'll have to look only once, because as you remember each one, each one will fade from the map, the words dying on the page, just like your past sins have "died" to God. A second look at that part of the map and the words will soon be gone. Over time, you'll have a harder and harder time even remembering them.

As you look at the other half of the map, some of it will be unfamiliar terrain. It is not a detailed map. But just when you need more detail on the map, as you look to heaven, you will discover a new faint hand forming new words and pictures on the map, to show you the way ahead, and what you'll need.

No matter how narrow the road, keep moving. No matter how small the gates you encounter, walk through them. Even if you see large crowds taking the road that seems so much easier walk quickly away. Do not look back.

Keep looking up. Keep walking forward.

You know you will finally be reaching your destination when you hear the sounds of trumpets and the song of countless people singing with great rapture.

Then, you're almost home.

1. What strikes you from today's devotional?