

Women & More

A Picture of Grace

Lesson 17: **March 3, 2016**—*grace*

There is an ‘innocence’ in animals that there is not in human beings, ever since the sin of Adam and Eve—the ‘fall’—in the Garden of Eden. Animals would need to die to cover men and women physically and spiritually, so that they could have relationship with God. In the Old Testament, God would accept an animal’s life and its blood as atonement for human sin, but each animal had to be specific in number and in description. Every sacrificed animal must be:

1. a **male**; 2. a **yearling**, and 3. **without defect**.

► Numbers 29:7-11 describes the sacrifices for the Day of Atonement—Jewish **Yom Kippur**—like this: v 8 “*On the tenth day of this seventh month...Present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD (Covenant Father), a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect.*” This was a day of confession, contrition and celebration (Leviticus 16; 23:26-32) and was the most solemn of Israel’s holy days. In the New Testament, Yom Kippur is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world—Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24-26; Hebrews 9:7; 10:3, 19-22).

► Back to Numbers, in 29:12 “*On the fifteenth day of the seventh month (that would be just five days after the Day of Atonement)...Celebrate a festival to the LORD for seven days.*” Verse 13—“*Present an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD (Covenant Father), a burnt offering of **thirteen young bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect.***”

- Day 2**—v 17—12 bulls, 2 rams, 14 male lambs a year old, all without defect.
- 3rd** —v 20—11 bulls, 2 rams, 14 male lambs a year old, all without defect.
- 4th** —v 23—10 bulls, 2 rams, 14 male lambs a year old, all without defect.
- 5th** —v 26— 9 bulls, 2 rams, 14 male lambs a year old, all without defect.
- 6th** —v 29— 8 bulls, 2 rams, 14 male lambs a year old, all without defect.
- 7th** —v 32— 7 bulls, 2 rams, 14 male lambs a year old, all without defect.
- 8th** —v 35— 1 bull, 1 ram, 7 male lambs a year old, all without defect.

Along with all of these animal sacrifices, **each day 1 male goat was sacrificed as a sin offering** (vv 11, 16, 19, 22, 25, 28, 31, 34 and 38). Numbers 29:39-40 sums: “*In addition to what you vow and your freewill offerings, prepare these for the LORD at your appointed feasts: your **burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings and fellowship offerings.***’ ⁴⁰Moses told the Israelites all that the LORD commanded him.”

There also were the Regular offerings:

- (1) The **daily** offerings (Numbers 28:1-8)
- (2) The **Sabbath** offerings (28:9-10)
- (3) The **monthly** offerings (28:11-15)

And there were the Festival offerings in addition to the two we've covered (Day of Atonement and Feast of Tabernacles or Booths):

- (1) The **Passover** (Numbers 28:16-25)
- (2) The **Feast of Weeks or First Fruits** (28:26-31)
- (3) The **Feast of Trumpets** (29:1-6)

The sacrifices in Numbers 28 and 29 do not include any voluntary love offerings that one might give (chapter 15), or any vow of particular petition or consecration referenced in chapter 30. There was a regular pattern of sacrifice, and thousands and thousands of young animals were given up....

†Then the New Testament Gospel of Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus—Son of God—son of David. Henry van Dyke “The goodness of God is before the badness of man. The divine forgiveness antedates the human sin.” God’s grace—free favor—antedates creation. Before “*In the beginning*”; before ever God uttered ‘*Let there be*’; before the evening and morning, before the mountains and seas, and before the green plants and animals, God planned to extend GRACE to us. Ephesians 1:4-8 “*For he chose us in him **before the creation of the world** to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love she predestined us to be adopted as his sons (daughters) through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us **in the One he loves**. ¶In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*” A lot went on before creation!

While we must not try to visualize God, because his visage is too magnanimous for us, and anything we could conjure up would be so far short of what he really is that we would violate the Second Commandment not to make any image of God for use in worship, **we can picture his grace**. And though we cannot do so fully, we can make an attempt: God’s grace on our behalf invited and involved all of His goodness; all of His greatness, and all of His godliness. **In spite of all he knew of us, he chose us anyway!**

“The grace of God reveals One who loves us so much as to have made Calvary possible, but who hates sin so much as to make Calvary necessary,” said T. S. Mooney. “If we were to envision our sins as stored in God’s great computer, we would see Him press the ‘delete’ key when we choose to receive His Son’s blood-shedding death as payment for our sin—our sins have been deleted forever. Now, the Father looks at the clean, white page of Christ Alone. That’s grace! And Charles Spurgeon: “Wonder at the price that was paid for us when Christ knew what we should be! O redemption, how wondrously resplendent does thou shine when we think how black we are!”

Ephesians 1:7-8 *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the **riches of God’s grace** that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.”* Knowing full well what he was doing—what he is doing in saving sinners—God lavished grace on us. Some benefactors in this world may lavish blessings, favors, mercies and money on people who, in the end, did not treat their gifts right, but not so with God. He lavishes his grace with all wisdom and understanding. We can trust that if he has saved someone—a Saul of Tarsus—though we cannot understand the ‘why’ we can trust that God knows exactly what he is doing. Psalm 78:38-39 *“**Yet he was merciful**; he forgave their iniquities and did not destroy them. Time after time he restrained his anger and did not stir up his full wrath. **39He remembered that they were but flesh**, a passing breeze that does not return.”*

Spurgeon again: “The present salvation and the faith and the whole gracious work altogether are not of ourselves. First of all, they are not deserved because of our prior performance. They are not the reward of former good endeavors. No unregenerate person has lived so well that God is bound to give him further grace and to bestow on him eternal life. Otherwise, it would be no longer of grace, but of debt. Salvation is given to us, not earned by us. Our first life is always a wandering away from God, and our new life of return to God is always a work of underserved mercy, performed in those who greatly need, but never deserve, such gracious favor.”

God’s grace took us from the sin pit—to ‘just as if we’d never sinned’, to a joy factory, to be kept for the kindled kindness of the King of Kings. Our kinsman redeemer kissed us with his kindness. Someone has said that we are guilty of plenty. And plenty of guilt requires plenty of grace! Mercifully, grace was bestowed upon the unworthy and unmerited ‘guilty-of-sin’ by His Worthiness: *Picture* that! God’s grace to us was unbounded, unfathomable, unconditional, and it was unfolded and unwrapped and even unleashed to the immeasurable and indescribable degree. For us it was unexpected, unwarranted, undeserved, and **more often than not unclaimed!**

We were entirely unworthy. We were poor in every way, sinful in every respect—filthy and vile—unregenerate, unrepentant and unstable in every manner, following our own inclinations instead of our Creator’s: Having our own ideas of right and wrong instead of yielding to the Judge of all the earth. Bearing the marks of sin’s stains instead of retreating to the Savior’s cross. We were full of pride, arrogance, ignorance, indolence and idolatry—we were willful and selfish.

We don't like to imagine, much less picture, ourselves in relation to grace, but before **G**od's **r**iches **a**t **C**hrist's **e**xpense Scripture says we were: objects of horror and scorn; a haunt of jackals (Jeremiah 9:11-10:22) on barren heights, prowling ruins in desert places. We were as an unclean latrine (2 Kings 10:27)—a dung pile or heap, we were matt-haired and lean-fleshed and a laughingstock, and we languished and withered (Isaiah 24:4) in wickedness. Crushed and leveled by the law, we were lazy, evil brutes, and gluttons: The leech in Proverbs 30:15 *"The Leech has two daughters 'Give!' 'Give!'"*

We were malefactors and criminals—maligning and mauling—making our own gods—Acts 19:26 *"Man-made gods are no gods."* We were lacking and lagging and leprous, with stinking saliva on loose looting lips. Covered with flies, we were lowborn—maddening maggots working their magic—and putrid. We had itching issues—every woman a Jezebel. In jesting, jeering, jeopardy we were jailbirds—jars of hatred with consuming jealousies. We were devouring dogs with loathsome limbs, torn ligaments, out of joint, knotted and rotted—refuse on the ground. Witchcraft and divination; spiritism and sorcery were our lot.

Everything that the Ten Commandments warned against, we were fully guilty of. And so we were **1. Conscripted, 2. Consigned, and 3. Condemned to eternal death—on death row.** The infection of sin was all over us! We were pungent with pus, mold and mildew—we were degenerate, dejected, desperate and dead. Festered with fugus, and wasted; contagious with lusts and lies, covets and cursings, malice and murder. Filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) and rigorously runny rashes rooted in 'rot'. We were unloving and unlovely; unholy and impure, ungodly and unclean—accused and refused, but for God's great grace.

—A way some criminals were left to die in the ancient world was to be tied to a corpse, and as it was being devoured by the agents of decay and decomposition, the live person was decimated to death as well. **That is a picture of the sin nature—the sin factory—before grace got a hold of it.** We were lost—heirs of wrath, fallen, and undone, but the ruined would receive redemption and regeneration; distinguishing and discriminating grace. **GOODNESS gracious—great grace was needed; but Great grace was given!**

God's grace is available and sufficient not only for our salvation but also for every situation in our lives and without any cost to us. Confession, as described in 1 John 1:9, brings out the full extent of grace: It is the 'grace-act' of God from beginning to end for which there is no end! Yes, choosing to follow Christ—discipleship (*followship*)—will cost us, but God's grace will not: it is free!

Some don't want to repent and accept God's free gift of grace, but want to **work to earn God's favor**—which cannot be done. Working to earn speaks to 'deserving'; it's much more acceptable to the sinful human nature to try to prove to God that we are not that bad—and God so hates **p r 'I' d e!**

♦**Sin after grace**— Philip Yancey: “Why be good if you know you will be forgiven? Not even an emphasis on repentance erases this danger completely.” Paul in Romans 6:1b “*Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?*” His explosive answer in v 2: “**By no means!**” Jude in chapter 4 warns us not to change the grace of our God into a license for immorality. **No born-again—given new life—Christian should desire to spend time at the sin trough!** Spurgeon: “Grace is at a low ebb in that soul which can even raise the question of how far it may go in worldly conformity.” And Faber states it this way: **“God does not save us by grace so that we may live in disgrace!”**

♥A story of grace in Matthew 22:1-14—Jesus told of a wedding banquet which a king had prepared for his son, and he likened the guest list to the kingdom of God. The king sent his servants to the invited guests (Israel) and told them to come but they would not. Then again in verse 4 “*Then he sent some more servants and said, ‘Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner. My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.’*” They paid no attention, but some mistreated and murdered the servants. The enraged king sent his army and destroyed their city.

♥♥Gentiles are invited in 22:8—“*Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. 9Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ 10So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.*”

WOE in verses 11-12—“*But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless.” Though the invitation to ‘come’ is a grace-gift, we must be covered with the blood of Christ—we cannot earn our way in and we cannot come some other way. The celestial banquet-Giver knows who are His! Verses 13-14 “*Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie his hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 14For many are invited, but few are chosen.’*”*

We are saved through the unmerited mercy and free favor of God—salvation through the blood and righteousness of Jesus, because our ‘best’ is **not near good enough**; our works **fall far short**, and our ceremony is **self-righteousness**. Let us be careful never to presume upon God's good grace!