

Week 2 – Embracing Grace: Grace in OT (Handout)

Definition of Grace

Last week we looked at the three Hebrew synonyms that are sometimes translated as “grace.” These three words can also be translated as love, compassion, kindness, favor, mercy, pity, and even holy. Because they are synonyms, we can substitute these words in place of grace and explore our understanding of the idea of grace. The basic idea of grace is that it begins in the heart (love, compassion) and expresses itself in actions (kindness, mercy, etc.) that benefit another person. How would we define it in a dictionary?

- (1) Grace is unmerited compassion/love/kindness.
 - (2) Grace is the compassion, sensitivity, kindness and joy arising from the loving heart of one who is in a position to help resulting in actions that benefit another who is in need.
 - (3) Grace is the beneficial assistance of someone else that is motivated by compassion and love.
 - (4) Grace is the creation of possibilities that are impossible without God’s actions
 - (5) Grace is the action that emerges from a heart of love, compassion, and kindness.
 - (6) Grace is...
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Examples of God’s Grace (How are these examples connected to *hesed, rahem*?)

Genesis

- Gen 3:21 – God makes garments to cover the shame of Adam and Eve after they sin in the garden.
- Gen 6:8f – Noah was granted grace (found favor in the eyes of God) and was spared the judgment of sin

God saved Israel from slavery (what are the implications of accepting God’s call & grace?)

- Deut 6: 20-23 also 7:7-11 (grace comes before command to obey)
- Ezekiel 16:3-7 (graphic description of God’s compassion and grace)

The Law as an example of God’s Grace (how does our attitudes about “the law” or obedience connect to our acceptance of grace?)

- → Concrete Law / Knowledge of God
- Deut 4:1-8 “What nation...”
- God’s presence (Ex 33:12-17, Lev 26:10)
- Compare to Ashurbanipal prayer from 800BC

The Law teaches the practice of Grace Lev 19:2, “be holy, for I am holy” (Why would God command something that needs to flow from the heart?)

- (v. 9) “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest...”
- (v. 13) “Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight...”
- (v. 14) “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind...”

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- (v. 15) “Do not pervert justice...”
- (v. 33) “When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him.....Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”
- (v. 35) “Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight, or quantity.....I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.”

God restoring faithless Israel after the Babylonian Captivity (What do we learn about grace in these stories?)

- Faithless bride of God is invited to return and find mercy. (Jer 1-3, especially 3:11f)
- God divorces Israel and yet courts her back with kindness. (Hosea 1-3)
- Restoring Israel after Sin. (Ezek 36:22-37:12)

God’s grace / mercy / compassion / kindness in Psalms (how are the synonyms interwoven in these poems?)

- Ps 8 – (4) “What is man...”
- Ps 25 – (6-7,10, 16f) “Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old...”
- Ps 31 – (7-8,16-21) “...for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul...”
- Ps 33 – (5,18-22) “...the earth is full of his unfailing love...”
- Ps 36 – (5,7,10) “Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings...”
- Ps 52 – (1,8) “...I trust in God’s unfailing love for ever and every”
- Ps 69 – (13,16) “but I pray to you, O Lord, in the time of your favor; in your great love, O God, answer me with your sure salvation.”
- Ps 85 – (7,10-13) “Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other...”
- Ps 89 – (1,2,14,24,28,33,49) “righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you...”
- Ps 103 – (4,8,11,17) “Who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion...”
- Ps 107 – (1,8,15,21,31,43) “Let them give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.”
- Ps 118 – (1-4,29) “...his love endures forever...”
- Ps 136 – “...his love endures forever...”
- Ps 144 – “What is man...”

Discussion

- What do these OT examples tell us about grace?
- What would it mean to “embrace” these examples? What resists the embrace?
- When was a time in your life that you had to “embrace grace”?