

## PASTOR'S PEN AND A STORY OF GRACE:

### When Grace Brings Relief

By its biblical definition grace is “unmerited favor”. That is, you receiving something you did not earn or do not deserve. In this regard, every birthday gift you have ever received has been grace. Every Christmas gift you’ve ever given has been grace. Never once as a child did I have to shovel snow so that I could get Christmas gifts. Rather, gifts under the tree were freely and graciously given.

The Scriptures tell us that we have been saved by grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 famously state, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” At the very heart of our salvation is The Wonderful Grace of Jesus. A Grace that is greater than all our sin. An Amazing Grace. An unearned Grace.

Because we have received everything from God through his grace we are freed to give graciously in return. This is part of what the Lord created before hand for us to do. Verse 10 of Ephesians 2 says, For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” So God has graciously given us everything we need and prepared beforehand that we be his workmanship. He has saved us to use us. We are instruments of his grace to others.

This past June, I had the privilege of leading a small team of men to Staten Island New York to give grace to others. Your gracious gifts provided the resources needed that allowed us to go!

I’m sure you remember well Hurricane Sandy, a super storm that destroyed significant parts of the East Coast. New Dorp Beach in Staten Island New York was one of those areas. Referred to locally as “the swamp” this low lying area became a basin that collected the surging storm waters as they crested over the sandy shores and into neighborhoods.



***Our team ripped off and then reconstructed nearly an entire roof during our trip.***



***Here you can see the water line near the top of the siding...this home would have completely been filled with water.***

Many people in this area did not evacuate and were left with very few options for survival. Climbing into their cramped attics, with their children and pets, as the waters rose nearly 12 feet and flooded everything, they waited for rescuers to come and pull them to safety.

Once a vacation hot spot the New Dorp Beach first thrived as a place for the wealthy to have their second home...their beach home. These beach bungalows were built several years ago and not particularly well. And as seasons changed and different people immigrated to NYC from around the world these smaller homes became affordable housing options.

Anyone with a mortgage will tell you Home Owners Insurance is a bank requirement. It’s how the

bank protects its share of the asset it is selling to you one monthly payment at a time. However, once you own your home outright you are no longer required by anyone to carry homeowners insurance. You may choose, as the sole owner of the property and structure, to not insure it against loss and damages. It’s probably not wise, but it is an option. An option that many living in New Dorp made opting to save monthly to help pay other bills. Add on top of that the fact that since it was technically the storm surge, flood waters, that caused all the destruction and not the swirling winds of the hurricane, unless these home owners also had flood insurance they were without assistance.

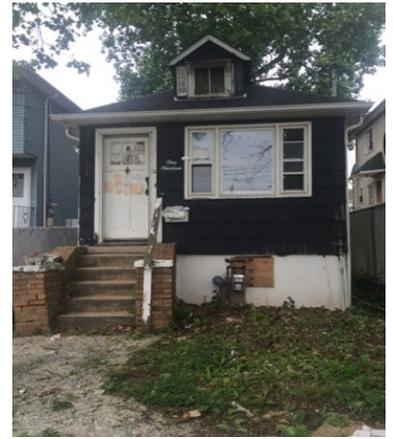


***Here is a local real estate ad circa 1920-1930.***

## Pastor's Pen and A Story of Grace Continued:

The disparity amongst those who had flood insurance and those that did not was palpable. In the months that followed the storm, gigantic homes were erected where little shacks had once stood. Towering 3 story buildings, which probably quadrupled a families living space, could readily be seen next to homes with walls that were covered in mold. Neighbors who once shared similar looking homes now found themselves in a devastating real life scenario of "the have's & have nots."

But grace brings relief and it does so, in this instance, one nail, shingle, or 2x4 at a time.



*Here is a home that has not been touched yet.*



*Here you can see several old bungalows and new 3 story homes recently constructed.*

If we were to consider merit of the people we helped they had none. We did not know them. They had never done anything for us. And truth be told they were reaping the natural consequences of the foolish decisions they made.

Not carrying home owners insurance is not wise. Furthermore, living in "the

swamp" and not carrying flood insurance is in a whole different category of foolishness. But that's why grace is so amazing.



*Almost Finished with Work on Day 1*

The grace we have been given by God was not the result of our merit. It was not that we had done something so wonderful for him that he was then obligated to return the favor. And truth be told he "made us alive" (Ephesians 2:5) while we were reaping the natural consequences of our sinfulness.

The grace we have received compels us to extend grace to others. The grace you gave to the families we served in Staten Island was greatly cherished. The grace you gave, in the form of funds, food and fuel to our work team was a great blessing to us!



*How we enjoyed our evening after finishing work on Day 1.*

Thank for you for your grace to us. And thank you for your grace that was given through us.

For the Glory and Fame of Jesus,

Pastor Timothy