

RESTORING GRACE

Lamentations 5:21

February 20, 2008

INTRODUCTION

- A. Today we are finishing our series on God's Grace. We have seen...
 - 1. Saving Grace.
 - 2. Forgiving Grace.
 - 3. Sustaining Grace.
 - 4. Healing Grace.
 - 5. Liberating Grace.
 - 6. Offering Grace.
- B. Today we consider "Restoring Grace".
 - 1. Our relationship with Jesus is just like any other.
 - a. It has to be maintained.
 - b. No relationship stays the same.
 - c. We are either growing closer to Jesus or drifting away. We just can't stand still.
 - d. The Christian life is a lot like riding a bicycle; we are either moving forward or falling off.
 - 2. We all know Christians who no longer practice their faith.
 - a. They have quit or fallen away.
 - b. Maybe we fit into this category too.
 - c. It's scary to realize that most of the people who failed in Scriptures failed in the second half of their lives.
 - 3. The good news is that God offers us "Restoring Grace".
 - 4. How does He do that? First let's consider....

I. WHY PEOPLE FALL AWAY FROM THE LORD.

(We will use the story of Peter's falling away in Mark 14:27-72)

- A. First, over-confidence can cause people to fall away.
 - 1. Peter is an example of this—v.29.
 - 2. Scriptures: I Corinthians 10:12 & Proverbs 16:18.
- B. Second, complacency can cause people to fall away.
 - 1. Peter is an example of this—v.37.
 - 2. It's more difficult to do the right thing than it is to do the wrong thing.
- C. Third, fear of other's opinions can cause people to fall away.
 - 1. Peter is an example of this—v. 54a.
 - 2. Do we try to follow Jesus at a distance because of what others might think? (i.e. praying before a meal in public)—Proverbs 29:25.
- D. Fourth, convenience can cause people to fall away.
 - 1. Peter is an example of this—v.54b.
 - 2. We want to have a faith but we want it to be comfortable or convenient.

II. WHY IS GOD WILLING TO RESTORE US?

- A. First, because His love is unconditional.
 - 1. God doesn't love us only when we're good any more than we love our kids only when they are good.
 - 2. God will never stop loving us—Lamentations 3:22.
- B. Second, because our salvation isn't based on our performance—Titus 3:5.
- C. Third, because Jesus understands our weaknesses—Hebrews 4:15.
- D. Fourth, because God doesn't hold any grudges.
 - 1. You may be thinking, "But you don't know how far I've fallen? No, but God does.

2. Psalms 103:9-13.

III. WHAT SHOULD WE DO WHEN WE FALL?

- A. In a word, “return”—Jeremiah 15:19.
- B. Peter returned and so can we—Luke 22:31-32.

CONCLUSION

- A. It happened in just a blink with a quarter mile to go at the 2005 running of the Preakness. Afleet Alex had battled his way to the front of the pack when another horse cut in front of him, and their heels clipped each other. Afleet Alex stumbled, his knees buckled, his nose nearly went into the dirt, and his jockey, Jeremy Rose, hung on.
“That’s the closest I’ve ever been without falling. I thought for sure we were going down,” Rose said. “The thought process was, I was going to get run over. Luckily, he came right back up underneath me.”
Afleet Alex not only recovered, he went on to win the race by nearly five lengths. The Bible sometimes refers to the Christian life as running a race. Unfortunately sometimes we stumble and may even fall, but we can always get back up and finish the race because of God’s Restoring Grace.
- B. Have you stumbled or fallen away from the Lord?
- C. You can be restored right now—Lam.5:21.