

Weekly Devotional by Pastor Ken Nabi
February 17, 2010

What Grace Looks Like

"When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts." Acts 11:23

The early church was beginning to experience persecution for their faith and as a result are scattered over a variety of geographical areas. A small group of believers who escaped persecution went to a town called Antioch and there God began to bless their faithful witness. The Apostles down in Jerusalem began to hear of these reports and sent Barnabas to investigate whether the rapid growth and excitement was from God or not. The above verse reports Barnabas' response when he arrives in Antioch and observes what God is doing.

How do you "see the grace of God" exactly? And how does a person experience "gladness" as a result of seeing that grace. And how can grace evidenced like this produce gladness and ultimately inspire perseverance ("remain true to the Lord")?

First, how do you "see" grace? Barnabas went to Antioch to see the believers who escaped persecution and rather than observing a beat down group of people barely surviving, he saw power and joy and growth. That is what grace does. Grace takes defeat and persecution and turns it into triumph and evangelistic expansion. Barnabas "saw" grace because he was able to see it's power manifest in a group of people who would not be broken down but rather were flourishing in the power of Jesus' love so much that they were sharing it with others. The church was actually expanding under the difficulty of relocation.

Second, how does this kind of grace produce glad hearts? When grace is evidenced in this manner, it has a profound impact on the heart. It is a shocking thing to see the opposite of what you might expect. To see how grace takes discouragement and transforms it into joy and growth is a heart jarring experience. It makes any heart tuned into Christ glad and joy-filled.

Third, when you see grace take a down and out person and then change them, you can let that gladness have its effect and the by product will be endurance and perseverance. You get inspired to endure and persevere when you see grace do its work. That is how these believers were inspired to remain true to the Lord with all their heart. Both these believers in Antioch and ultimately Barnabas were enthused to not give up when they would experience difficulty in the days ahead. This all starts with grace poured out into the lives of people willing to bring their brokenness to the God of all creation.

Grace is amazing to behold isn't it? I love to "see" the grace of God.

I got to see the grace of God this last weekend when our former senior pastor and his wife, Tim and Ann Haugen, came to town here and taught on the value of marriage and the power of hope in Jesus. The grace of God took a failure story and turned it into triumph. The grace of God took pain and transformed it into strength in Christ. The grace of God took a church that easily could have been relegated to irrelevance and made it a trophy of his goodness. The grace of God was a thing of beauty to behold.

This kind of grace poured out in our midst always reminds me of the importance of perseverance and endurance. God is up to something here and I don't want to miss it or be derailed in my service. I want to cross the finish line in life and be full of gladness that the grace of God had its way in my soul. This is what grace does.

Have you seen the grace of God in your own life? Is brokenness being turned into healing and hope? Is the truth found in Jesus changing your life? Draw near to God and plead for new measures of his grace in your life. He wants to make you a shining example of His goodness no matter what your issue or baggage. Then, we can all "see" the grace of God manifest in our midst. And I for one would love to see more of it here.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes that I may see the grace of God in people around me and in my own life. Take my own brokenness and transform it to something which allows people to see you in my life.

Your Partner in the Gospel – *Ken Nabi*