

THE GRACE OF CHRIST

Wonderful, marvelous love! How can it be excelled? It cannot! The scripture commands Christians to “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 2:1.) Grace is unmerited favor, unearned love. That is the kind of “grace” found in Christ Jesus. Jesus showed people amazing love! This is the grace that Christians are commanded to possess!

Hello I’m Larry Murdock. I preach for the Gandy church of Christ.

It is hard for humans to show the grace of Christ and much harder to be strong in it. When your life has been full of envy and strife, it is hard to show the kind of love demonstrated by Christ. When you are full of hatred and malice because of something someone did to you, it is hard to allow grace into your heart. Humans have a hard time with the kind of grace demonstrated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

We learn love from two sources: human and divine. We learn love first from our parents. Some children are raised in the shadows of strife, fussing and fighting, a world of angry raised voices. Anger develops into malice that easily becomes physical. Division is usually the result, separation and finally divorce. But that does not end it, especially when the children are in the middle. The Children then may witness a smoldering hatred, a dirty, insinuating rivalry between their custodians. One or both parties cannot stop the snipping, and so the couple continues to demonstrate unkindness before their children. How can the children escape the pain and hurt caused by angry parents? Is it possible? Learning to love like Jesus Christ is the answer to this problem.

On the other hand, some children are raised between loving parents. These children witness love in action. They may very well grow up to be loving parents themselves. These children take seriously what their parents have attempted to teach them. But Satan does not stop tempting people because they were raised by loving parents. On the contrary, through a variety of other means these children can also learn from the world of their peers, and from the world of make-believe. The sinful world can twist love into pornography and hideous desire, exploited love, opportunistic love, love of self above all else.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is a great light in a world that is full of dark, twisted love. What was the Grace of Christ like?

Christ was compassionate toward everyone. Oh, what divine love it is when humans can show compassion even to the vilest of sinners. Jesus had compassion for people because of many types of situations. For instance, Jesus felt strongly for people because they had no leader to lead them to salvation. Matthew 9:36 says that when Jesus saw the crowds, “he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus then said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest that he will send out laborers into his harvest.” Those people needed leaders; Jesus called those people laborers in the Lord’s harvest. Even today, we need leaders who can show the compassion that Jesus felt for leaderless people.

On another occasion Jesus had gone out to an isolated place to get away from the multitude and pray. However, the crowd followed him and found him. Jesus looked up and saw a great multitude of people, and Matthew tells us that “he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” (Matthew 14:14, ESV.) Jesus always showed compassion upon the sick and afflicted. Earlier in the book of Matthew, the writer tells us that Jesus “went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. (24) So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them.” (Matthew 4:23-24 ESV.) Jesus took the time and gave people what he could give. He gave them healing.

After John the Baptizer was in prison, he heard about the deeds of Jesus. So John sent some of his followers to Jesus to ask him a question. "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (4) And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: (5) the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. (6) And blessed is the one who is not offended by me." (Mat 11:2-6 ESV.)

Among the great that Jesus was doing, Jesus thought it was important that the poor have the good news preached to them. Jesus’ first mission was to

compassionately teach in their synagogues and proclaim the good news of the kingdom. Even though the great compassion of the Lord can be seen in his treatment of the sick and afflicted, Jesus' first concern was His compassion for the souls of the people. Jesus cared about their souls, whether the people would go to heaven or hell. He compassionately told the people about the good news of the kingdom. Jesus walked all over Galilee and later Decapolis, Perea, Judea, and even among the despised people of Samaria. Why? Because Jesus despised no one! He had compassion upon all. In his words, "He came to seek and to save the lost." Jesus trained his disciples to go out and heal the sick and preach the good news of the kingdom. Luke chapter 10 records Jesus instructions when He sent out his disciples to preach. **"Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. (9) Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'"** (Luke 10:8-9 ESV.) You see, the kingdom of God was the bottom line.

Well what is so compassionate about preaching the Kingdom? Which kingdom you are in makes the difference between heaven and hell. That's right! You see, the kingdoms of the world were following Satan, just as they are today. The Kingdom of God follows God. Jesus, like John the Baptizer his forerunner, came announcing the beginning of a new Kingdom, God's kingdom, also called the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom was established by Jesus Christ and is still in the world today. That's right! Christ's kingdom had been predicted by the prophets hundreds of years before Christ came.

The old prophet Daniel was called to interpret the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. Daniel said that the king had seen in a vision future kingdoms that were to come after his own. In the days of the last kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel predicted that God would set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed. Daniel said, "It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever." This eternal kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the kingdom of Christ, also called the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus was showing compassion by preaching the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus' compassion for the sick was real. But His compassion for the spiritually sick was also real. Jesus' great kingdom is Jesus' great church. That's right! And the things that Jesus taught in describing the kingdom of heaven apply to His church.

I know that the kingdom and Christ's church are the same institution because of what Jesus said in Matthew 16:18-19 when he said, "I will build my church." Jesus told Peter and the other apostles that "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." Jesus used the word church and the word kingdom interchangeably. Jesus was going to build the church and Peter and the other apostles would have the keys to open up the kingdom of heaven. The entrance into the kingdom of heaven is compassionately laid out in the New Testament of Jesus Christ, written by the key-holders, the apostles and prophets of the first century A.D. Without the compassionate testimony of Jesus Christ we could know nothing about the kingdom of heaven, the church of Christ. When Jesus walked those great distances in order to preach the kingdom of heaven, he demonstrated his great love for souls of the people.

The church of Christ still goes to great lengths to preach and teach the kingdom of Christ. It is a labor of love. The preachers and teachers in churches of Christ carry on the great commission given them when Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world and preach the good news to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be condemned." (Mark 16:15, 16.) Our heavenly Father has shown His great love and compassion for the human race by sending His only begotten Son to take the world's sin upon himself, and then die a separation from God on behalf of the world. The wages of sin is death. But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23.)