

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

Grace has been our theme for this week. But what is grace?

We use the word grace to speak of someone's smooth and polished manner, they're graceful. We call our prayers at mealtime, grace. We use the word grace as a person's name. I've even heard some use grace as an insult or put-down when someone stumbles like, "Way to go, grace!"

But when we speak of grace in Biblical terms, we're talking about an unearned mercy, kindness, or favor. We're referring to someone receiving kindness, when punishment is actually deserved.

Acts chapter 15 shares just such a situation. Paul and Barnabas were preparing for a missionary trip. Barnabas wanted to bring a young man named Mark along to help them, but Paul refused. You see, Mark didn't have a very good track-record, and Paul was still frustrated. Verse 38 puts it this way: "***But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.***" This created such a division between the two of them that Barnabas took Mark going one way, while Paul took another worker, Silas and went another direction.

Paul's attitude was, "Mark failed before, I don't want to take a chance on him failing again." But Barnabas chose to extend grace. He wanted to give John Mark another chance. In the end, even Paul had to admit that Mark turned out to be a man of God, helpful in ministry, as Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy:

2 Tim. 4:11 Only Luke is with me (Paul writes). Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.

This young man, John Mark, was transformed by the power of God and the undeserved mercy, the grace, of a gentle believer named Barnabas. Are there times in our lives when we should extend grace to others, instead of what they may seem to deserve?