



A LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR: DECEMBER 2019 by Lee Shipp

THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE

There is something different about the love of God and the love of His children and there is something altogether different about the love that comes from the religious who claim they are serving God and the love of God.

Consider the goodness and kindness of the Lord. When Israel sinned by worshipping golden calves, dancing in shame around the golden idols, God was still true to His nature and love!

God has hope for shameful people! Satan wants to swallow them with sorrow, but God wants them to enter into the Holy of Holies! Truly! While Aaron is making the golden calves, God is telling Moses how Aaron is to enter into His presence and minister to Him;

I am not advocating sin. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! There is no mandate here for disobedience, nor does it make sin less serious, but I want you to know that when all seems lost, mercy can shine through judgment, and the rainbow of God's promise tells of everlasting hope!

When every hope is dashed, when every noble dream and every holy ambition, written with the finger of God Himself upon your heart, is shattered, hope can rise again, and grace can chase away the gloom - there is manna on the ground! He has not left you, nor left you comfortless!

God said through the prophet Haggai, "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not" (Hag 2:5). God might well have said to His people of old, "For forty years you grieved my Spirit, and yet I never left you!"

DESTROYED WHILE SEEKING CHRIST

There is a destruction going on in the Body of Christ and many do not understand it. Many come to church FULL OF SHAME and sin. They cannot escape the guilt and weight of shame. They are afraid, but they have nowhere else to go. They are seeking salvation in Christ. This is the place they hope to find Him.

They are among us, they are us! God only has one Son who was perfect - Jesus! But yet, the shameful people come, seeking a refuge, hoping for salvation. They come to church after fulfilling their lusts and desires all week and are sick of their hypocrisy.

trying to hide from or trying to be saved from: the shame of not being a person people can love, the shame of not fitting in, the shame of not being liked by others, the shame of fearing that others are going to hurt you, the shame of being afraid that everyone can see right through you, that you are naked and nobody wants you, people are embarrassed of you, the shame of fearing that you will be rejected and despised.

Let the church fight by love for one another so that all of us who once were covered in shame would not be ashamed of the shameful and seek their deliverance through the blood of Jesus. And why do the shamed risk so much in coming to church? They are hoping for freedom, for reality, for somebody to help them. They come with the question, is there mercy for me? Is there any hope for me?

Do you have any idea how hard it is for shameful people to get the courage to go to a house full of holy people? Do you comprehend the fear they have to overcome just to be around you?

The shamed walk into a place and hope they will be accepted. They cry within, "I hope I am liked, wanted, known for who I am and still wanted." They wonder, "what if I fail? Will the church put me away ... be embarrassed of me, disown me?"

According to 2 Corinthians 2, Satan seeks to swallow the people up with sorrow by an unforgiving, harsh and loveless church. Satan swallows his victims by sorrow; not by a lack of repentance, but a lack of hope!

Honestly, it is the church that must show the goodness of the Lord. Paul warned the church, forgive them, comfort them, receive them, confirm love to them lest Satan swallow them with sorrow. But too often, the sad reality is that few churches have followed Paul's instructions to comfort, accept, and confirm the love of God to the shamed. Smiles are everywhere, but ice is in the hearts. The shamed are not accepted, not allowed into fellowship, they are not approved! Oh the chilling horror of such an experience in God's own house, and the shamed turn and cry, "I am never going in there again."

"WHEN EVERY HOPE IS DASHED, WHEN EVERY NOBLE DREAM IS SHATTERED, HOPE CAN RISE AGAIN ... THERE IS MANNA ON THE GROUND - HE HAS NOT LEFT YOU"

And do you know that this is a common experience in the house of God? However, that is not the demeanor and love of the God of the house, it is just the imperfect distorted love of His children. God declares you are accepted in the beloved! This means that when one walks into God's house, God approaches them with joy that they have come to Him. Knowing everything about you, He makes you know that He longs for you and wants to accept you. He wants you to know how He longs to approve of you through His Son Jesus. He wants you to know that you are approved in the Beloved Son! Religion says, "We will approve of you if ..." God says, "I approve of you because ..."

PREACHERS ARE KILLING PEOPLE

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul shows there are those who preach the letter (the law). They kill people with the letter. They are not ministers of the Spirit who give life. These preachers of the letter speak to the conscience of men, reinforcing the fear they are living in. They assure the shamed that they are shamed, they are wrong, and sinners. Their guilty conscience confirms this letter of truth is right! So, what do they do? Like Adam they try to hide behind prayers, deeds, and religion. They are afraid and seek freedom from this fear by appeasing the demands of the law; which they will never do! It is the destruction of the letter!

Totalitarian rulers with convictions boldly serve as God's holy emissaries demolishing multitudes ... seeking to rob them of the liberty that abounds through Christ! Because of these abusive lawyers, more people have left the church of Jesus and are not coming back. These totalitarian rulers have welded two of the most powerful weapons known to man: The Bible and God to manipulate men for their advantage!

Multitudes are threatened with the letter by preachers who are not sent by, nor anointed with the Holy Spirit. I wonder if the leaders who preside over this carnage are even aware of the thousands of shipwrecked lives out there. There appears to be total disregard by the leaders in these groups of the mounting and appalling destruction resulting from their preaching of the letter. There is no cause for a man seeking Christ to become wrecked. No. No justification for it whatsoever.

For those preachers of the letter, the problem is not doctrine. They preach the letter and it is true. The problem is their hearts. Their disciples are twice the children of hell! They are young men and women who have learned how to rebuke and criticize one another. These ministers of the letter appeal to the pride in people's

hearts, cultivate a self-righteous arrogance, and water and fertilize their destructive tendencies with misplaced scriptures and religious zeal.

This devastation is so costly, for if you lose trust in Christians, you have absolutely nowhere to go. Fear and confusion become the order of the day. Young men and women who should have grown up and grown old serving the Lord are ruined forever! Christians aborted, never given the chance to lay hold of the wondrous liberty found in Jesus' grace! Scattered throughout the country and the world are those aborted lives of bitter and shipwrecked people who just simply hoped to find help in Jesus.

But there is a Spirit-anointed minister who brings life. I cry to you beloved to shield men and women from Christendom's corruption. Give the shamed an environment of liberty, grace, and hope. Lead people into the fullness of Christ without fear of destruction and rejection. Pass on to the next generation an experience of Christ that is higher than anything the last generation has known. Press them beyond our spiritual growth and limits in Christ. Then hope. Hope these kids ... will best all of us!

MINISTERS OF CHRIST MUST DEFEAT THE FEAR

Men have typically misunderstood God. Fear is oftentimes the culprit. Because we have sin, we fear – a sense of future punishment from the Almighty God. It causes us to not understand God's desires for us. We filter all religious thoughts through this lens of our guilt and God's justice. We assume that God's motives are of judgement rather than love. Adam in the garden hid from God because of shame and fear. On Sinai, with thunder, lightning, and earthquakes Israel refused to hear God and told Moses to go before the Lord. But when God came, when Jesus drew near, God's love shown forth. Sinners were drawn to Him. In Him was hope and love and redemption. Jesus brought grace and truth to the earth! He brought the full revelation of God – God is love! He cried to the people, "I did not come to condemn you." And the children ran to Him, the sinners hoped in Him.

Fight fear with love! Perfect love casts out all fear! The church needs to be about people who are fighting for one another. A people who are not ashamed of the shamed. Satan is the accuser! If you are accusing people, then it is obvious what spirit is working in you. But God's people are those fighting Satan for the freedom of others. They are overcoming Satan's brutal attack on people by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony! The church is the place where the shamed and wrecked can find refuge and salvation from the scourges of the enemy. It is the place where the repentant will find comfort and the confirmation of love. If you are going to be a Christian, you are going to spend your life forgiving people! Resign yourself beloved to this truth: you are going to live to free everybody from everything that separates them from God.

REIGNING IN LIFE

There is a people that reign in this life! The Bible assures us of a true and tangible victory. Not a hollow confession of wishes, but a true and manifest power. Not a testimony with clenched teeth that says I am not depressed, but a radiant demeanor of joy and freedom. The once shamed people of the earth are to be clothed in this beauty! According to Romans 15, those who have this manifested victory are the ones who have been given the gift of righteousness and an abundance of grace (Romans 5:17)!

If you are not enjoying this power in Jesus it is because you are being denied an abundance of grace. Perhaps you are sitting under those who are ministers of the letter. Perhaps you are not open to live by grace, you believe that living by grace is not enough to gain the favor of God. Your defeat is the proof of your error!

The hope for all men is the gospel of God's grace! Has the pressure of religion slammed you into the walls of defeat? Have you struggled to achieve holiness only to have a breakdown, and you feel that now all is lost? Are you more focused on discipline and what God requires than Jesus and the free worship of God? Then I joyfully exhort you, on behalf of God, to come by a new and living way!

If, by the abundance of grace you reign in life, then how can I give you too much grace? What person in need of God would ever say, "Enough of the grace give me something else now!"

By the grace of God, I am what I am. In my weakness His grace is my power. If grace is God's direct influence and power exerted upon my heart and life, then God's grace is Christ in me the hope of glory. It is God working in me both to will and do of His good pleasure. It is by the indwelling Christ that we reign in life and are able to have everything. God's grace refers to all the passages of how the Holy Spirit works within the believer and sanctifies the believer.

Therefore, everything comes to the believer by grace. Everything you need to be holy, to be faithful, to be victorious, to be used, to be happy is by abundant grace. It is not grace and other things. You would not say to the preacher, teach me about grace and also about conviction, as though they are separate from one another. Likewise, it is not: teach me about grace and also about holiness, or faithfulness and not sinning, or discipline, or separation from the world, or repentance.

When you speak on grace – the abundance of God's help, you are speaking on conviction. When you speak on grace, you are speaking on holiness, discipline,

repentance, and works of faith. It is by this abundance of God's help that you are able to prevail and reign in life! God's grace becomes the means by which you live – you lean and rely upon God in a way you never did before. I am so afraid for the religious people of the letter who are scared to live by the grace of God alone!

Come on, you want your ministries to REIGN? Give your people an abundance of grace and get rid of the lawyers! Anybody can reign in life if they would receive the abundance of grace.

Just imagine the life they could have, the love they could have, the freedom they could have by the abundance of grace. Do you want to encourage men? Give them an abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness. But if you want to take the life out of them, tell them their salvation depends on their works; tell them they must perfect holiness by something other than grace.

I do not think I can speak too much of God's grace, for it is the means by which God himself has come to save me and is working in my life to accomplish everything He desires of me. Furthermore, if my relationship with God is on the basis of faith then nothing can separate me from the love of God but unbelief! I have suffered the most horrendous blows of hell. The force and magnitude of hell has raged against my life. I have laid flat on my back as hell has launched its most powerful weapons against me. Lying there on my back, broken, I would whisper, "Is that all you have? Your best has not separated me from the Love of God which is in Christ Jesus my Lord."

All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus, yes and amen! Can you believe this? Can you live by the abundance of His grace or do you demand a relationship with God that is based on debt? Are you constantly feeling that if you pray enough, fast enough, give enough, suffer enough then God will be in your debt to help you? You will never reign in life that way. Abraham did not live that way, he lived by faith!

Don Francisco is a songwriter who writes many ballads from the Bible. One song in particular depicts the beauty and advantage men are given by God's grace. The scene is set in the house of a religious man who can only relate to God by the law. In the view of these religious elite, sinners and shameful people are contagious and defiled – they have no place among the holy. But on this particular occasion, He, who is grace and truth is sitting among these holy men. A woman with a horrid reputation for sin finds her way into the room of holy men and falls at the feet of grace and truth. Appalled by her appearance, the holy men take this as an opportunity to frown upon Jesus, surmising that if He were a prophet, He would know what kind of woman this was and would never allow her to touch Him. But Jesus, being the prophet, discerns their thoughts and spoke to the holy men saying ... oh, just let me let Don Francisco say it by his song, "Beautiful to Me."

*Now of all the women in my town none was more well known
For the flagrant sin she'd lived in and the wickedness she'd sown.
But He didn't move to stop her – seemed this prophet couldn't tell
That the woman who was touching Him was the kind they buy and sell.*

*And I had no idea just what this Jesus planned to do
When he said "Simon, there's something I need to say to you."
So I said "Teacher, if it's on your mind then tell me what you will."
But as He began to speak to me the room grew quickly still.
He said "Take a good look at this woman now, in spite of all her fears
She's kissed me and anointed me and washed my feet with tears.
She's honored me and you've been only rude to me instead.
You gave no kiss of greeting, no anointing for my head."*

*And her sins were red as scarlet and now they're washed away.
The love and faith she's shown is all the price she has to pay,
For the depth of God's forgiveness, it's more than you can see
And in spite of what you think of her, **she's beautiful to me!***

*Now my anger flamed to hatred, I wanted nothing more
Than to take this prophet by the throat and throw Him out the door.
To act like God, forgiving sins, and then speak so to me.
This itinerant from Nazareth in backwards Galilee.*

*But instead I sat and trembled, shaken to the core
The woman still was weeping as she knelt there on the floor,
Jesus turned to her and said, "Your chains have been released,
Your faith has saved you from your sins, rise – walk in peace."*

*Your sins were red as scarlet but now they're washed away.
The love and faith you've shown is all the price you have to pay,
For the depth of God's forgiveness, it's deeper than the sea
And in spite of all these Pharisees, **you're beautiful to me.***

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