

## Applying Grace To Others - Ron Stullenbarger -

In response to the wealth of grace given to us by our heavenly Father, we are called to be ministers of His grace to others. Until we set others free from having to live up to our standards, we will never experience true freedom ourselves. Living apart from an attitude of continual grace robs us of the joy of living without unrealistic expectations of others. When we are slow to offer grace for the sins of others, we step outside the realm of God's will and place our hope and security in this fleeting world.

Jesus tells an important story for us to heed in Matthew 18:21-35. In this parable a servant is forgiven of an insurmountable debt owed to the king. But rather than taking the grace he was shown and offering it to others, the servant sought out a fellow servant and began to choke him until he paid his debt. Upon hearing of his servant's lack of grace, the king has him thrown in prison until he paid off what he owed. And in verse 35 Jesus concludes, *"So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."*

We are called to offer grace to others, and not because of who they are or what they've done. If grace were based on merit or self-worth, it wouldn't be grace. We are called to offer grace because no debt owed to us compares to the insurmountable debt of sin forgiven by the death of Jesus. There is no wrong someone could ever commit against us that could compare to the amount of unmerited favor we've received.

In offering mercy to the undeserving we shine the light of God's grace into the darkness of a world without second chances. May we not be like the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18, but instead be like our loving Savior. May we commit an abundance of grace that the lost cannot comprehend and the world cannot explain. May the love of our heavenly Father shine through us as we run out to meet the weak and sinful at their point of need and offer them mercy and compassion.

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 says, *"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."* May we gain everything as we seek to love others with God's compassion and grace. May we love beyond what the world understands and offer grace beyond what anyone could expect.