

LINKS PLAYERS

DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR MARCH 15, 2013

GRACE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning. (1 Corinthians 15:34, NIV)

Some golf stories are more pain, some more laughter. This one is both. In the blinding light of a low sunset, a player's ball headed toward a funny OB corner. He hit a provisional, just as he should have done. But by the time he was finished, he had incurred penalties for the OB, for hitting a wrong ball, and for picking up his now active provisional. Score for this closing hole: 13. Score for his high school team's match: a tie, converted to a loss in the tiebreaker.

This player was mine. And you can bet that we had a talk with the whole team about marking your ball and not putting your hand to a ball before you know the rules—in other words, we talked about using the knowledge in your head, even in the heat of competition. But then I went home and got to thinking myself. I opened the rulebook and discovered my own error. I had agreed to one more penalty shot than should have been given. I too had lost track of what was right.

Grace is, as has been oft-repeated, "God's riches at Christ's expense." In going to the cross, Jesus did what we could not. He overrode the strictures of the Old Testament Law and provided instead the way of forgiveness. And it is by this grace—and no accomplishments of our own—that we are saved. It is a grace we seize through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

And yet our faith was never meant to stop there. Listen: there is also a righteousness that comes by faith. It is Christ's righteousness, to be sure, and not our own (Romans 3:21-24), but it is the righteousness we are to live as well. In Christ, we are to live as Christ lived.

Some want to say, "It is grace, it is grace, it is only grace." Indeed, true righteousness comes to us in no other way. But once we have it—once we have seized upon God's forgiveness and been made righteous in his eyes—we are to make every effort to live righteously. Thus Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery: "Go and sin no more." Paul wrote to the Romans that we do not go on sinning that grace may abound, and to the Galatians that we forsake the misdeeds of the flesh. And as we read today, he told the Corinthians to return to their senses—to remember that they had been bought at great price—and to stop sinning. We are not to sin because of grace but live righteously because of it.

Opening questions: Pain and laughter

When have you done something so painful on the golf course that it turned into a laughable story later? How about in your life? What lesson—big or small—did you learn from this occurrence?

Paul's outline

The normal outline for the apostle Paul's letters was to begin by reinforcing who we *are* in Christ, then move to what we should do in following him. Scan the letter to the Ephesians and note early examples of who we are when we are in Christ.

Now note later examples in Ephesians of what we should do because we are living in Christ's righteousness.

Sober living

Read Romans 12:2-3 and 1 Peter 1:13 and 5:8. How do these passages support the idea of thinking through our actions so that we may live righteously?

The next step

If you are to live as Christ lived, in what area of your life do you need to change?
