

News from the Robertsons

March, 2008

I have a great group of men who meet with me on Wednesday evenings to study the book of Galatians. One thing that has become crystal clear through its teaching is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about grace. It is by God's grace that He saves us through faith, and it's in response to His grace that we live for Him by faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). Some want to mix law and grace, but Galatians tells us that this is impossible. To go back to the Law means to "set aside" the grace of God, and to return to the Law nullifies the Cross: "If righteousness came by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Gal. 2:21). Law says DO! Grace says DONE! "*It is finished!*" was Christ's victory cry on that first Good Friday.

Bola villagers tell the story of how, years ago, early missionaries translating liturgy into Bola inserted the Latin word, *grāsia*, for grace, because they could not find an equivalent word in the language. The Bola people had no idea what *grāsia* meant. After a long discussion, they decided it must mean beard, because in *Tok Pisin*, the trade language of Papua New Guinea, the word "*gras*" meant hair or beard. Titus 2:11, then, would have read, "For the beard of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."

The Bola people now realize the word *grāsia* does not mean beard or hair. But the search continues. Currently, Bola translators are using the phrase "the good deeds of God toward us" to explain "grace." Bible translators worldwide are diligently looking for just the right words or phrases to explain God's grace because we know that *it is the very crux of the Gospel and is, in fact, the real Easter story.*

The 18th century song "*Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing*" says it well:

*"O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above."*



Anita, a new Wycliffe member who I recently released to depart with her husband and two children for an assignment to support Bible translators working in the West Mediterranean, wrote the following: "Daily, as I am convicted of my own sin, I am more and more thankful for God's grace. Not grace that allows us to continue in sin, but grace that redeems us from our flesh. This is grace that covers our sins, grace that brings repentance.

'Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.'

"A fetter is an instrument of restraint, like handcuffs or feet shackles. It holds things together with a strong link. And God's goodness to me, in forgiving me, in His long suffering towards me, in His faithfulness to change me, binds my heart to His in awestruck debt. How wonderful it is that we can be honest with the Lord in our struggles and at the same time ask Him to not allow our wandering and to restrain us with His goodness. This is my desire, this is my only hope, that He is the One who does the sealing, He is the one who binds me to Him."

My friends, *it is* all about God's grace; and *that* is the real Easter story!

FAMILY

Thank you so much for your prayers for Nathan as he has been serving in Afghanistan over the past 14 months. He is due to come home in April, be discharged from the Army, marry Krista Bondurant on June 14, and move to Atlanta for music school. Noelle is to be married to Brian Patterson Sept. 27 in Ocean Isle Beach, NC. Our eldest, Brian, continues to work for IBM in NYC as well as finishing up his MS in IT/MBA at NYU. More on our website www.philrobertson.org

As we celebrate Easter this year, I hope you'll grasp the real Easter story; how God freely gave *everything* to us who deserve nothing. Thanks so much for your partnership with us as we help bring this Gospel message of Grace to people around the world. If you desire to partner with us in this work, write to Wycliffe Bible Translators, PO Box 628200, Orlando, FL 32862-8200, and be sure to include a separate note "for the ministry of Phil & Debbie Robertson".

