



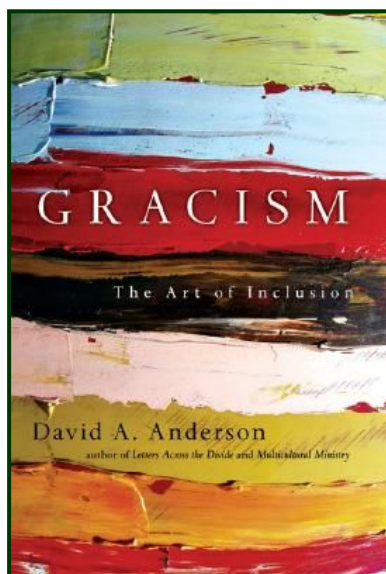
DEAN WELCH – TEACHER



WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

AUGUST 30, 2009

LESSON #7 FROM THE *MASTERWORK* SERIES STUDY OF:



TEACHER



CELEBRATE! CELEBRATE! CELEBRATE!



With Thanksgiving Day less than 90 days away, I came across a classic *Peanuts* comic strip that dealt with that celebration. Picture if you will, it's Thanksgiving Day and the aroma of roast turkey fills Charlie Brown's house. Snoopy is outside—lying on top of his doghouse—and smells that aroma and is thinking, "It's Thanksgiving Day. Everybody eats turkey on Thanksgiving Day." So he lies there, watching the back door, eagerly awaiting HIS Thanksgiving dinner. Finally, the door opens and out comes Charlie Brown with a bowl of dog food—which he puts on the ground for Snoopy. Snoopy gets down off his dog house and stares at the dog food with a forlorn look on his face. He thinks, "Just because I'm a dog, I have to eat dog food on Thanksgiving Day." Then the next square shows him looking at the dog food more intently and he is thinking, "It could be worse. I could be the turkey."

Today we finish not only Week 7, but our entire 7-week study, from David Anderson's book, *GRACISM*, about how we are to extend God's grace to others—regardless of culture, class or race. As we begin, let's read the focal scripture passage that David Anderson used in our daily Bible study lessons this week. Turn to **1 CORINTHIANS 12: 26 (NIV)** and follow along as I read: ***26** If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part **REJOICES** with it.* With the reminder again that this passage by Paul is about **SPIRITUAL GIFTS**, Anderson extends the principal to include how each of us a members in the body of Christ should rejoice with **OTHERS** over their successes. Just as we are to enter into the suffering and pain of others, so we are also to rejoice or celebrate with others—especially when those who are less fortunate, downtrodden or neglected finally elevate.

Listen to how the *Holman New Testament Commentary* explains this particular passage of scripture by Paul: ***"If one part suffers from pain or disease, then every part suffers with it. Most people have experienced how things as small as toothaches and***

*ingrown toenails can wreak havoc on their bodies. The appendix may be small and have no apparent function, but when it suffers it jeopardizes the life of the entire body. Moreover, when **one part is honored** and treated with great care, then every other part of the body **rejoices with it**. For example, soaking one's feet in cool water after a long walk brings delight to the entire body."*¹

In the same way, what Paul is saying here is that every Christian is important to the church and to every other Christian. Because of the union that believers share with one another in Christ, what happens to one believer happens to everyone. The Corinthians needed to learn this lesson, so Paul designed this portion of his argument to address the situation of their divisions. Turn to **ROMANS 12:15 (NIV):** ***¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.***

Which is easier for you: suffer with others or rejoice with others? Why? I'm convinced that one of the most difficult things that the Scripture asks us to do is found in Romans 12: 15. Now the mourning part is not so hard to me. If there are those who are having a difficult time in life, going through trials and tribulations, we can usually get up enough sympathy and empathy to hold their hand and provide a shoulder for them to cry on—maybe even to cry with them and to pray for them during their difficulties.

But to "rejoice with those who rejoice" may be harder. Now, it is pretty easy to rejoice at the wedding of a friend if you're happily married. But if you're single and you'd like to be married; if you're lonely and feel rejected, then an invitation to someone else's wedding may be a pretty difficult thing to handle. Or, say you drive an old car that's showing its age and then your neighbor buys a brand new Cadillac Escalade—loaded. Someone else at the office gets a promotion and a raise—and you don't. It

¹ *Holman New Testament Commentary*, Max Anders, General Editor, Richard L. Pratt, Jr., Author, p. 219-220



is kind of hard sometimes, isn't it, to "rejoice with those who rejoice"? **Why is it hard to "rejoice" with others?**

I think that one of the difficulties with this **REJOICING** idea is that when something good happens to others, we often **COMPARE** ourselves to them. "Well, I'm smarter than they are." Or, "I work harder than they do." Or, "They're just lucky. They get all the breaks, and I don't." *Did you hear the story about the two writers who were very jealous of each other? Their animosity was apparent. Then one of them wrote a book that was quite successful. In fact, it was a best seller and he was widely acclaimed. The two came face to face at a party and the second man said, "I bought your book the other day. It's a good book. Who wrote it for you?" Shaken a bit by this, the first man nevertheless thanked him for the compliment about his book and then asked, "Who read it to you?"*

2

Again, it's hard for most of us to rejoice with others who rejoice! I think that it's not always easy because when we start comparing ourselves with others that leads to discontent, envy, grumbling and broken relationships. Yet, as Paul reminds us in **verse 27** of 1 Corinthians 12, *"Now **YOU** are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a **PART** of it."*



We see it happen in the sports world all the time, don't we? Here is a player who is making millions of dollars—has 5 cars, 2 houses, and the list goes on. He has it made. He's happy and contented, isn't he? Then he discovers that someone else who plays the same kind of position he does is making more money than he makes. What's the result? Discontent, envy, grumbling, and broken relationships. So that's the problem and it begins when we start comparing ourselves with others. Someone said, "Pride!" I think that's right. But, why can't we rejoice and celebrate with others over their successes? We know what God's Word tells us to do? Why can't we extend God's grace to those who may have struggled all their lives and have finally HIT the jackpot?

Turn to **ROMANS 12: 4-5 (NLT)** and let's see another place that Paul talks about the body and its function: *"Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his **ONE** body, and each of us has **DIFFERENT** work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we **BELONG** to each other, and each of us needs all the others."*

Muscular dystrophy is a terrible disease. The person with MD has all the right parts and equipment available – brain cells, neurons, axons, dendrites, muscles – but they don't work properly. The problem isn't in the brain. The brain sends the appropriate signals. The problem lies between the nerve and the muscle. The nerve conveys the brain's message, such as move, turn, lift, etc., but the muscle does not respond. The body is essentially non-responsive to the brain's commands. Recall what **Ephesians 4** tells us—*there is one body and one Lord over the body—Jesus. What happens when we don't obey his commands, follow his lead?* We have a sick body. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. "Muscles that are not used will atrophy." How healthy a part of the body are you?

Are you obedient in lifting up other brothers and sisters in the body? Listen as I read what **HEBREWS 10: 24-25 (NLT)** tells us about this: *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

But some of you may be asking, *"Whoa, Dean. What's the big deal. Why does all this matter?"* Remember the scripture passage we talked about a couple of weeks back in this study about not being divisive but unified—from **JOHN 17:21-23 (NLT)**? Just before Jesus went to the cross He prayed for all of us. Listen to His prayer: *"My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father — that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you"*

sent me. I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are — I in them and you in me, all being perfected into one. Then the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me."

Why don't we want to rejoice and celebrate with **OTHERS** who finally achieve success after struggling so long and hard with life in general? We mentioned pride—but what about our **ATTITUDE**? *Joe Theismann enjoyed a great 12-year career as quarterback of the Washington Redskins. He led the team to two Super Bowl appearances—winning in 1983 before losing the following year. When a leg injury forced him out of football in 1985, he was entrenched in the record books as Washington's all-time leading passer. Still, the tail end of Theismann's career taught him a bitter lesson: I got stagnant. I thought the team revolved around me. I should have known it was time to go when I didn't care whether a pass hit Art Monk in the 8 or the 1 on his uniform. When we went back to the Super Bowl in 1984, my approach had changed. I was griping about the weather, my shoes, practice times, everything. Today I wear my two rings—the winner's ring from Super Bowl XVII and the loser's ring from Super Bowl XVIII. The difference in those two rings lies in my attitude.*

3

God's timing is perfect. Our life is just a journey and He wants to perfect our faith any way He can. As Max Lucado reminds us in his book *Just Like Jesus*, "God loves us just the way we are—but He loves us too much to leave us that way." You see, He wants us to be just like Christ. Recall a wonderful memory verse from **ISAIAH 40:31 (NIV)** about God's timing: *But those who **WAIT** on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall **MOUNT UP** with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be **WEARY**, they shall walk and not **FAINT**.*

4

When we see others' successes, maybe we're trying to get ahead of God. *In the spring of 1883 two young men graduated from medical school. The two differed from one another in both appearance and ambition. Ben was short and stocky. Will was tall and thin. Ben dreamed of practicing medicine on the East Coast.*



Will wanted to work in a rural community. Ben begged his friend Will to go to New York where they could both make a fortune. Will refused. His friend called him foolish for wanting to practice medicine in the Midwest. "But," Will said, "I want first of all to be a great surgeon...the very best, if I have the ability." Years later the wealthy and powerful came from around the world to be treated by Will at his clinic—the Mayo Clinic.

Wonder how easy it would have been for Ben to rejoice with his friend Will after his success? Why?

Last week I read something interesting about the huge redwood trees in California that is amazing. Did you know that they are the largest living things on earth and the tallest trees in the world? Some of them are 300 feet high and more than 2,500 years old. You would think that trees that large would have a tremendous root system—reaching down hundreds of feet into the earth. But that is not the case. Redwoods have a very shallow root system. The roots of these trees are, however, intertwined. They are tied in with each other; interlocked. Thus, when the storms come and the winds blow the redwoods still stand. With an interlocking root system they support and sustain each other. They need one another to survive. So do we! That's what Paul is saying to us through these passages about extending God's grace to others—regardless of race, culture or class.

God has given us His Church which is the body of Christ on earth. When one is baptized into Christ, one is baptized into the body of Christ. Through Christ we are bound together in a **COMMUNITY** of faith. Belonging to Christ we belong to **EACH OTHER**. Fellowship with Christ means fellowship with each other. Through Christ, God has made us a family, a community of faith. This is our God-given **SUPPORT** system. As such, it is intended to meet some crucial needs in our lives and so when one part of the body succeeds—no matter which part—we are to rejoice with them as they rejoice. Please don't forget that God will supply all your needs. Listen to these words from **PHILIPPIANS 4: 19 (NIV)**:

5

"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

F.B. Meyer preached in London, England, while Charles Spurgeon and G. Campbell Morgan were preaching there, too. They were all great preachers, but Spurgeon's church and Morgan's church were both bigger than Meyer's church. And he admitted to being a bit envious of them. Can you identify with that? So Meyer prayed, asking God to tell him what to do because he was jealous of them and he didn't want to be jealous. Somehow God instructed him to pray for both Spurgeon and Morgan, that their churches would prosper, and that more and more people would come to them. Well, Meyer said that he didn't want to do that. But he thought that he had better obey the Lord. So he prayed diligently that Spurgeon's church and Morgan's church would grow and grow. He said, "Their churches grew so much in answer to my prayers that they overflowed. And," he said, "the overflow came to my church."

So, celebrate, celebrate, celebrate with others within the body of Christ when they succeed—even if it's something that you wanted for yourself. Rejoice—as Paul says—we are to rejoice! Pray for the ones you envy and be thankful that we are all part of one body—the body of Christ Jesus. Listen again to the words from **ROMANS 12: 15-16 (NIV)**: ¹⁵**REJOICE** with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be **PROUD**, but be willing to associate with people of **LOW** position. Do not be conceited.

6

When things don't go our way, we just don't want to rejoice. But, God's Word reminds us to "do everything without complaining or arguing." And "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you..." Let me give you a good example of rejoicing with others even when things don't go your way: *Lou Gehrig died in 1941 at 37 years of age. He had contracted a disease called ALS, which came to be known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease." For 14 years in the 1920's and 30's he was first baseman for the legendary New York Yankees. That team was perhaps one of the best teams*

that ever played baseball. On June 2, 1941, Lou called up Bob Considine, his friend. Just before he died he said, "Bob, I've got good news for you. The boys in the lab have discovered a new serum and it is really working for 9 out of 10." "What about you?" asked Bob Considine. "Is it working for you, Lou?" "Well, no, it hasn't worked for me yet, but how about those odds – 9 out of 10?" he said.

That's rejoicing with those who rejoice. Two years before, Lou Gehrig stood before the Yankee faithful in Yankee Stadium to receive their applause as he left his career and the game he loved. Knowing that he was dying, he said, "Today I'm the luckiest man in the world." His biography is entitled, "The Luckiest Man in the World."

As we close, I'm reminded of the parable Jesus tells in **MATTHEW 20: 1-16** about the landowner who needed workers in his fields, so he went out and hired men throughout the day. You remember the story? The owner went to town and hired a group to help early that morning and promised to pay them a day's wages—a denarius. He went back three hours later and hired another group, then three hours later a third group, then three hours later another group. Then, with just an hour left in the workday, he went back and hired a final group. The kicker, as you recall, was that when pay-time came at the end of the day, the landowner paid the last to be hired first and gave them the same day's wages and he gave everyone else.

Now, look at **verse 11** of Matthew 20: *"They began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.'"*

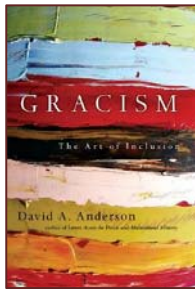
"It's unfair," they're saying. But notice the owner's answer in **verse 13**, *"Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?"* In other words, "I fulfilled my part of the contract. I paid you what we both agreed upon."

So "Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave to you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?" He is saying, "Don't worry about how much someone else is getting. Just be thankful that you have more than enough to feed your family, and now so do they."

So here's the question, "How do we learn to be unselfish, to **REJOICE** with those who get more than we?" Stop comparing ourselves with them or others who have more than we have. Pray for God to bless those you envy. Remember the story about F. B. Meyer? Third, encourage others. And, finally, be thankful—like Lou Gehrig. Paul says it best in **PHILIPPIANS 4:4** when he says, "*Rejoice, again I say rejoice!*"

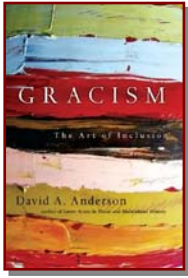
And please remember the way we do this is by following what Christ tells us in **MATTHEW 6:33**: "*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*"

Let's Pray!



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SESSION SEVEN — AUGUST 30, 2009



1. **1 Corinthians 12: 26 (NIV):** *"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part _____ with it."*

 - ★ With the reminder again that this passage by Paul is about _____, Anderson extends the principal to include how each of us a members in the body of Christ should rejoice with _____ over their successes.
2. One of the difficulties with this _____ idea is that when something good happens to others, we often _____ ourselves to them. "Well, I'm smarter than they are." Or, "I work harder than they do." Or, "They're just lucky. They get all the breaks, and I don't."

 - ★ **1 Corinthians 12: 27 (NIV)** reminds us, *"Now _____ are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a _____ of it."*
3. Why don't we want to rejoice and celebrate with _____ who finally achieve success after struggling so long and hard with life in general? We mentioned pride—but what about our _____?
4. God's timing is perfect. **Isaiah 40:31 (NIV)** tells us, *"But those who _____ on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall _____ with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be _____, they shall walk and not _____."*
5. Through Christ we are bound together in a _____ of faith. Belonging to Christ we belong to _____. Fellowship with Christ means fellowship with each other. Through Christ, God has made us a family, a community of faith. This is our God-given _____ system.
6. **Romans 12: 15-16 (NIV):** *"_____ with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be _____, but be willing to associate with people of _____ position. Do not be conceited."*