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GROUNDHOG GRACE

According to Punxsutawney Phil, we will be getting some relief from this frigid winter cold and have an early spring! As unlikely as that most likely is, it can't hurt to wish, and is a great opportunity to revisit the classic movie about a weatherman who finds himself perpetually trapped in February 2, reliving Groundhog Day to never move forward in life. I couldn't help but notice some interesting similarities to certain aspects of the main character's dilemma to our own Christian life. The biggest similarity seemed to be in the way they received grace in their lives. When he finally accepts the frustrating bizarre truth that February 2 ends only to be relived again every morning, he begins to look at it as a constant do over. When he sees this wormhole of insanity as a gift to avoid consequences, he begins

living life to it's fullest. In the beginning he leans towards merely selfishly indulging every desire he can possibly squeeze into 24 hours, having no recourse or regret to deal with as whatever is done is immediately erased to start fresh every morning. Eventually he becomes bored with self indulgence and eventually starts to look for deeper meaning and satisfaction with his life and turns into the ultimate servant. Spending his days protecting, helping and serving the community of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, he has finally made peace with his life and has truly transformed from the egocentric selfish man he once was to a man who is truly in awe of kindness, integrity and honor and is finally permitted to advance to February 3. I couldn't help but think of how

grace is designed to accomplish the very same thing in ourselves. We have been given an enormous gift in God's grace in that there is no end to the fresh clean slates He is willing to give to us. While some may be tempted to use this endless gift of available mercy as an opportunity to simply indulge in fleshy pleasures at will, the Apostle Paul teaches us this was never the intended purpose. "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life," Romans 6:1-4. Rather than an opportunity to increase in sin, God's grace is designed to train us to find the ultimate peace and satisfaction in giving ourselves completely to the Lord in service to Him and others. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for

the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds," Titus 2:11-14.

– Daniel Ruegg

More Thoughts From Jesus Turning Water Into Wine

I love Mary's comment to the servants in regards to Jesus' involvement with the wine running out at the wedding in Cana. "Whatever He says to you, do it," (Jn. 2:5). While this was the statement made directly to the servants at the wedding, this statement most certainly applies to all servants of the Lord. Mary had no idea what Jesus was going to do or say and was willing to leave it all in His hands, yet she felt compelled to prepare the servants with the proper attitude towards Him. Do whatever He says. What I love about this is Mary instructed the servants that this was the most appropriate response to His commands before she had any idea what He was even going to tell them! It teaches us a great lesson about obedience. Do you realize that obedience begins even before you ever read or

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7:10 KJV). “Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed,” (Titus 3:1). Are you prepared to obey whatever Jesus tells you? Have you already “purposed in your heart” (Dan. 1:8) that no matter what the command or nature of His instruction, you are fully prepared to follow Jesus? Apparently the servants at the wedding took Mary’s advice to heart and prepared themselves to be in obedience before Jesus uttered a single word. How do we know? Notice the extent of their obedience to the first thing Jesus told them to do. “Jesus said to them, ‘Fill the waterpots with water.’ So they filled them up to the brim,” (Jn. 2:7). The evidence of one who has prepared their heart for obedience is seen in the extent of their obedience once put into action. How are you responding when Jesus commands you to “fill the waterpots with water” in regards to the various instructions you are receiving from Him? Are you filling them up to the brim or are you dumping in small amounts, looking over at Him to check to see if you’ve put in enough? Those who are prepared to obey are not only prepared to do whatever He says, but are prepared to obey His commands to the fullest extent possible, all the way up to the brim.

– Daniel Ruegg

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



Solomon's Porch

The Temple Mount Sifting Project recently announced the discovery of a capital from one of the columns that formed the eastern colonnade of the Second Temple, known in the New Testament as "Solomon's Collonade." Josephus also describes the colonnade in both *Antiquities of the Jews* and *The Jewish War*. The capital itself is in the Doric style and would have adorned the top of one of the columns that surrounded the Temple Mount area to provide shade for those who visited the Temple. Dr. Leen Ritmeyer, one of the world's leading experts on the Temple, has responded to the announcement by agreeing that the capital is likely from Solomon's Colonnade while correcting information about the size of the column the capital likely came from. The Bible records that Jesus (Jn. 10:23), Peter and John (Acts 3:11), and the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 5:12) all spent time at Solomon's Colonnade. The capital, whose size indicates that the column had a circumference of 75 centimeters (30 inches) at its top, is a section of one column that formed part of the double colonnade that surrounded the Temple Mount plaza. Dr. Gabriel Barkay, the director of the Temple Mount Sifting Project, said that "this is a capital in the Doric style, one of the characteristics of the art in the time of the Hasmonean Dynasty. This appears to be the capital of a column formed part of the eastern colonnade of the Temple Mount, which Josephus and even the New Testament called 'Solomon's Porch.'"



A column like this is impressive testimony of the immensity of the structures on the Temple Mount in the Second Temple era, and fits in well with Josephus' narrative, which describes what he saw with his own eyes."