



“God, be merciful to me a sinner!” “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” This verse is very telling in the fact that God strongly opposes the proud. It also reveals that He gives more grace to the humble. Grace is the favor of the Lord which allows His benefit to flow to ones life. It’s Gods’ love freely given based on His goodness and not the recipient. It is God deciding to be the giver of favor on those who will simply humble themselves before Him. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus gives a parable of two men who went up to the temple to pray. This parable gives a stark difference between the self righteous and those whom God makes righteous. One was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee placed a strong emphasis on the observance of the law of Moses and oral traditions. They were many times critical of the ministry of Jesus because He did not follow their traditions. The tax collector was looked down upon because of his work for the Romans. The Pharisee would have had all the outward signs of being a true servant of God, whereas the tax collector would have been seen as outside of Gods’ covenant. The Pharisee prayed thus with himself and extolling his own goodness and righteousness, and that he was better than other men. Jesus gave this parable for those who trusted in their own self righteousness and despised others. This man was very religious, but very lost at the same time. He knew about God, but he did not know God. His prayer was self-centered and self absorbed. A man wrapped up in himself is a very small package. The Bible is very clear that our righteousness is as filthy rags. That means the best we can produce will not be enough to save our soul. The tax collector, on the other hand, recognized some very powerful truths that brought him to justification. He prayed, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” We can see that his prayer was directed at God and not about himself. We also see that he knew that he needed mercy to be what God wanted him to be. And he recognized without God, he was simply a sinner who needed help. Jesus said that the tax collector went home justified, and not the other man. To be justified means that he was viewed by God as righteous. He was given by faith, not what he deserved, but what Gods’ grace gave him. Jesus went on to say that every man that exalts himself shall be abased and every man that humbles himself shall be exalted. One had self righteousness, the other had Christ righteousness - which do you have?

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EDITORIAL

The Jewish-Christian Connection

Zechariah 2: 8 “For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye.”

For centuries the Jewish nation has been criticized, hated and many murdered by the misinformed. To base an opinion of a culture, nation or religion on generational thinking rather than truth and fact is unwarranted and unjustified.

Results of those misunderstandings have been catastrophic. The support of Israel against their 4000 year old enemy is imperative for Judeo-Christians.

Thousands of deaths on both sides of the conflict have been cataclysmic. Cultures, in many cases, do not coexist in harmony. Tolerance and a “live and let live” philosophy do not appear to be possible.

Dating back to Sarah (wife of Abraham) and Hagar (servant of Sarah) the disdain (Genesis 21:8-14) between the two factions has never ended.

While America was not founded based on Judaism, the foundation of the Christian faith is based on the Old Testament teachings.

One of the American founding fathers admonitions to future generations was a high regard for rights and particularly, the rights of others. One of those basic rights was freedom of religion.

America has many freedoms including freedom from oppression. Christianity through the concepts passed to us by the Jewish nation gives Christians freedom from the

bondage of sin.

The first pioneers/settlers on the shores of the western hemisphere were Christian and their religion was Christianity. To be hated or intimidated by another belief is not freedom.

To allow the infiltration of the new country by other religions was essential but problems have been spawned. Over the years those problems have escalated and a solution for coexistence is doubtful.

Jews first arrived in New Amsterdam (now New York City) from Brazil in 1654. The inquisition in Brazil was by the Portuguese, refusing to accept religious tolerance.

Over 600 Jews fled Brazil. Many went back to Europe but twenty-three went to the new world; now America.

The influence those Jews had on the settling of the new world was mostly positive. They assimilated into the population and very little, if any, conflict existed between them and the Christians.

As we consider the history and expansion of the Jewish people throughout the world (Ezekiel 36: 19), we must realize their influence on the rest of us is immeasurable.

Our history has a connection to Jerusalem more than any European city or country. Our blood came from Europe and other parts of the world but our connection to God came from Israel. When Moses went onto Mt. Saini and brought down the Ten Commandments, the stage was set for the formulation of many of man’s laws written yesterday and today.

Those laws (c o m m a n d m e n t s)

established by God, connected today’s world to the Jews, in a way that can never be severed or disputed.

God established the Jewish nation and their land around 4000 years ago. Their purpose was to provide the world with a Savior (Isaiah 49: 6).

Savior Jesus came nearly 2000 years ago to make eternal salvation a result of a faith based belief in Him. John 3: 16 states “whosoever believes in Him” will have eternal life. What was a horrifying ordeal for Jesus makes eternity simple for us.

For anyone to discredit the Jewish nation for providing the world with a Savior, a great misunderstanding does exist.

Genesis 12: 2-3 “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

We can see from verse three, to condemn and hate Israel is extremely dangerous. That great blessing noted in verse three was to be Savior Jesus.

The Jews set the concept of the blood sacrifice. The practice of the Jews in Old Testament times was to take an animal to the altar and bleed it. That blood sacrifice was for the atonement of their sin.

Leviticus 17: 11 “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the

soul.”

This verse also offers a biological fact. Blood is literally alive. To analyze the implications of our blood by its characteristics and abilities would fill volumes. Our blood furnishes oxygen and nourishment to all of the thirty-trillion cells in our bodies, one atom at a time.

The shedding of blood and that being associated with death signifies the salvation connection with Jesus’ death on the cross.

Hebrews 9: 22b “without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” The writer of Hebrews was explaining the Old Testament-New Testament connection.

That practice was followed for 1500 years before Christ was born. He became the blood sacrifice for the sin of the world.

When examined in detail, we see how the world is connected to the Hebrew people. Sad to say, billions do not realize this and the hatred of that people will continue.

One of our greatest enemies is misinformation. As long as misinformation is passed from generation to generation, the lies and deceptions will continue. Read and study the Bible for yourself.

John 1: 17 “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” Jesus gave us eternal salvation by grace and mercy by being a believer-follower of Christ Jesus, crucified and resurrected.

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Eastern Kentucky is Showing the Country What Rural Renewal Actually Looks Like

By Heidi Heitkamp and Robert Stivers

For years, too much of the national conversation about rural America has focused on what has been lost. Factories closed. Coal jobs disappeared. Young people moved away.

As two leaders from different parts of rural America, one a former Democratic U.S. Senator from North Dakota, the other a Republican and President of the Kentucky State Senate, we know these challenges are real. But after spending two days traveling through communities across Eastern Kentucky with the Brookings-AEI Commission on U.S. Rural Prosperity, we came away convinced the country is still missing the bigger story. The commission, a bipartisan body examining policy solutions to rural economic decline, visited the region as part of a national series of field hearings on what is and isn’t working in rural communities.

From Manchester using its heritage and swinging bridges to attract tourists, to downtown Hazard where artists and entrepreneurs are writing a new chapter for a town long defined by coal, Eastern Kentucky stands as an example of how rural America is not standing still.

Over two days, the commission heard from local leaders in housing, higher education, health care, and philanthropy, as well as job creators, local officials and nonprofit organizations. Despite differing perspectives, several key themes surfaced repeatedly: retaining talent, driving targeted economic investment, and confronting the substance use crisis to save lives and help people heal are key to changing the Eastern Kentucky landscape.

While these priorities may look like separate policy buckets, the strongest consensus centered on people, and the recognition that economic renewal is fundamentally tied to taking care of the residents who power these communities.

We see this reality playing out vividly across numerous counties, including Clay, Leslie, Harlan and Breathitt, among others, where outmigration has historically taken a toll as coal jobs vanished. For too long, a negative national narrative, the rise in substance use, and a lack of diversified employers left the region vulnerable.

Rather than accept decline, local leaders are intentionally mobilizing resources to reverse these dynamics through innovative nonprofit organizations. One example, is 1 Clay County (1CC), a nonprofit whose vision is to transform downtown Manchester into a hub of commerce, tourism and community life.

Moving a region forward requires a strategy that pairs infrastructure investment with a deep commitment to the health and safety of its people. On the economic side, this means securing millions of dollars in state funding, but the leaders at 1CC will also tell you that fixing utility lines and buildings only gets you halfway there, you also have to invest in the people who will actually sustain it. In Eastern Kentucky, addressing substance use disorder is a critical pillar of workforce development. By confronting the trauma and intergenerational challenges of addiction head-on, communities can heal families while actively restoring and retaining their workforce.

Rural communities are not failing because of a lack of effort, but because systems built in Washington, D.C. fail to fit rural realities. True renewal happens when policymakers appropriate the necessary resources but remain hands-off enough to trust local leaders to design and execute the projects that fit their unique needs.

Eastern Kentucky is proving something important to the rest of the country: renewal is possible when communities have the leadership, institutional support, and flexibility to shape their own future.

It is a lesson the Brookings-AEI Commission on U.S. Rural Prosperity intends to carry to policymakers in the nation’s capital and beyond.

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