

GARBAGE OR GRACE

Key Scriptures: Hebrews 12:14-15 and Ephesians 4:31-5:2

Introduction: The Esther cover story for this message is true. It is shared with permission so confidentiality is not violated. On the one hand, it is unbelievable. How could any one person experience so many tragedies and misfortunes? On the other hand, the adequacy of God's grace is absolutely amazing! It is grace that always exceeds the tragedies and the crosses in our lives. Someone said, "The way of the cross is the way of grace." It is, if we choose grace. Why would anyone choose to live out of the garbage can when grace abounds?

1. The core or center of personhood in the scriptures is identified by the term "heart" and it is the seat of thinking, feeling and will or behaving. (Romans 1:21, 24 and 2:5)
2. There is a conflict in the inner person between the law of sin and the law of the Spirit. (Romans 7:15-25)
3. A choice must be made whether to live out of garbage or grace. (Hebrews 12:14-15, Ephesians 4:31-32; 5:1-2)
4. The consequences of garbage can living is hostility to God and includes:
 - a. Distorted thinking.
 - b. Negative emotions.
 - c. Destructive behaviors that wound others, resulting in death.
5. The channel of Grace flows with abundant blessings and pleases God.

APPLICATIONS: There are four basic things to do to live out of grace and enjoy the *agapē life-style*. They are:

1. Forgiveness opens the gate to the channel for grace to flow. (Ephesians 4:32)
2. Thinking and living the truth break the lies that keep grace from flowing. (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
3. Walking in agapē love is becoming like Jesus, doing what He did and pleasing the Father because grace flows. (Ephesians 5:1, 2)
4. Standing against Satan in full armor secures the victory spiritually and keeps grace flowing. (Ephesians 6:10-18)

