

MARK'S REMARKS

Following the heavy rains these past few days, I noticed slow but steady drips falling from a rain gutter on the house. Now I am not the smartest person when it comes to construction, but I am aware that rain falling from the sky ought to run down the roof and into a rain gutter. Then like on a thrill ride at Valley Fair, this water should find itself rushing downward within a downspout bringing it to rest on soil several feet from the house. But this water was dripping ever so methodically upon the rocks below the path of the gutter. So after researching several books on housing and theories of gravity, and watching several reruns of *This Old House* and *Extreme Makeover on TLC*, I came to a profound discovery...the downspout was plugged. The solution was also clear after my diligent study...unplug the downspout. I would have to venture up to the roof and see if indeed there was an obstruction.

So, with Brenda waiting on the *solid flat* earth below, I made my way up two roof lines, laid on my stomach, told myself I was not Jimmy Stewart in *Vertigo*, and peered into the gutter. My careful analysis of the situation proved correct. There wedged in the downspout elbow was a faded, dirt-covered, water-soaked tennis ball. Behind it...gallons of water looking for a place to go, frustrated that the line for this amusement park ride was taking forever. So with tool in hand and my wife waiting below, I performed forceful surgery and removed the cause of this entire situation. Waiting water gleefully cascaded down experiencing its long expected ride. Upon reaching the soil, I trust it realized its reason for falling from the floodgates of heaven, to nourish and refresh the earth.

A child's toy or an object used to play catch. This simple tennis ball was casually thrown, purposely discarded, or accidentally forgotten. The result was a blocked flow of water that could and would cause greater damage if left unattended. This simple incident reminded me of sin and grace. Often in life we have an item that appears innocent enough but when placed in the improper location or used in an inappropriate manner it stops the flow of grace into our lives. Then as God pours down grace, this grace only slowly drips onto our lives. Instead of a rush of nourishment, strength, or refreshment, it simply and slowly drips onto the rocks never reaching the fertile soil for which it was sent. The result...our lives begin to become parched and dry. Decay and rot are given a place to establish.

Have any tennis balls in your life? Are there items or attitudes that prevent you from experiencing the grace of God that flows each and every minute of each and every day? Is it time to take the tools of Scripture and prayer in hand, allowing God to perform some forceful surgery? Maybe grace is waiting and wondering why the thrill ride it was sent to travel seems a little slow and boring.

The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus (I Timothy 1:14).

In His Grace,
Pastor Mark