

## Accepting Grace

One of my auto restoration projects was a 1956 BMW Isetta. Shortly after I obtained the car I had been put in touch with a man named Jim who owned several Isettas and had a shop not far from my home. Little did I realize that Jim was not only going to be a big help in restoring my car but was also going to teach me a valuable lesson about grace.

In the corner of his shop he had a gigantic compressor and a media blast cabinet and if you have ever restored an old car you know the value of one of these for removing all the rust from small parts. He told me to bring over some of my parts and he would show me how to use the media blaster. Almost every part that came off my car was covered with 50 years of rust and it was hard to tell if any of the pieces could even be used. I brought over a sorry looking box of parts and started blasting off the years of rust. It was on a hot day and the sweat rolled down my face stinging my eyes and some of the fine silica media escaped from the cabinet's seals and made my skin itch. It was a lot faster than using a piece of sandpaper or chemicals to remove the old layers of paint and rust but it was definitely hard work. After a while I was beat and told Jim I would be back the next weekend to work on the rest of the parts. He told me just to leave the box of parts there and if he got some time he would work on them a bit.

Much to my surprise when I showed up the next week for my next session I found all the parts in the boxes I was ready to get to work on were already finished. I knew from the little bit of blasting I'd done that these completed pieces represented many hours of work that Jim had done standing at that same hot and uncomfortable blast cabinet. My first human reaction was that I needed to return the favor but I had nothing that Jim needed nor was there any real way to pay back this debt. In fact there was a lot more of his expertise and parts that I would need from him for my car. Why had he done all this work for me? There was no way I could repay him. He barely knew me. Suddenly it became clear to me that the unmerited favor he had bestowed upon me was not because of what I could do for him and it was not about who I was, at all. It was about who Jim was. It was a testimony to Jim's character. Jim's gift on this occasion was an initial glimpse of a man that I know now, several years later, as a kind, giving and benevolent person.

When I first responded to God's love I could scarcely believe what Christ had done for me by dying on the cross. My initial human reaction was one of trying to figure out how I could repay Him and then I realized I had nothing He needed. And the truth be told, I was in fact needy and required more of God's favor each day.

Yes, I could try to live for Him and do the things that were pleasing to Him but these were things I needed to do them for the right motives – out of love. To do them out of a sense of duty, or obligation or in trying to repay Him was not the correct motivation.

Eventually there was only one thing I could do and that was to say "Thank You".

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.

Richard Lewis  
Pathway Christian Cruisers  
Pathway Christian Church  
Riverside, CA