

*Eyes that Cover the Sins of People*

I Peter 4:8

Writer Jonathan Leeman proposes that the local church is like a nation's embassy. An embassy is a *"delegation of people who represent their home country in a foreign country."* That's who we are. We represent the Kingdom of Heaven, and people should see us as representatives of the God of all grace. How do we do this? *We are called to publicize our King's mindset and to proclaim our King's message.* The book of I Peter is a letter written to God's people living in a foreign land: *"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens..."* (I Pet. 1:1). *"(to those) with an inheritance reserved in heaven"* (v.4). *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles"* (I Pet. 2:11), to live by the King's wishes in an alien land. *"Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because **love covers a multitude of sins**"* (I Pet. 4:8).

What does it mean to "cover" a multitude of sins? Does it mean you hide sin; excuse sin; lie about sin? No. It means a graced person, an emissary of the King, *keeps no record of wrongs done against him/her.* "Love keeps no record of wrongs." (I Cor. 13:5 NIV). That means a graced person is not a resentful person. "Resentment is our memory of a painful, angry past," Lewis Smedes. How do we keep no record of sin?

**I. I know that the God of all grace keeps no record of my wrongs.**

If you were to say to the average person, "Does God keep a record of your wrongs?" – "Yes" would be answer; the correct answer (Rom. 12:19). The gospel of grace is how God wipes clean the record. *"We are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 3:24). In God's courtroom, one is either justified or condemned; *justified freely by His grace in Christ Jesus.* Our vertical relationship with God is to be reflected in our horizontal relationships with other people.

**II. I know that the God of all grace never wastes my experiences or sorrows.**

It's what allowed Joseph to forgive his brothers and bless them with kindness and food. "As for you, you meant evil, but God intended it for good, do not be afraid" (Genesis 50:20). Peace in the pieces. The absolute sovereignty of God over your affairs and His transcendent goodness are real. You may 'not know how it works, but it shouldn't cause you to sit in the dark until you do. "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good" (Romans 8:28). Do you? You may not grasp how this works, but don't sit around in the dark until you do. Flip the switch. Let the light go on in your mind.

**III. I know that the God of all grace turns me from self-absorbed into selfless.**

Recording wrongs against me is self-absorption. The refusal to keep a record of wrongs against me is act of genuine love. But the God of all grace calls on us to protect the weak, the persecuted and the defenseless. "Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Ps. 82:4). If I am busy keeping a record of wrongs against me, I'll have no time for honorable actions for others.

**IV. I know that the God of all grace is as interested in what I don't do as what I do.**

Eight times Paul uses the word "not" (i.e., "Love does not") in I Corinthians 13. Paul spends half of his time and half of his ink telling us what *love does not do*. Love is not rude, not self-seeking, not proud, is not provoked and does not keep a record of wrongs. When we keep a record, we always have a list. **List keepers** use absolute language. "You always, you never, I would never, etc."

**List keepers** relate based on performance. Loved ones get tired of trying to measure up.

**List keepers** can't trust; they protect themselves. The prospect of future hurt paralyzes.

**List keepers** are hurting individuals who hurt others. Jesus Christ is to be the balm for our souls.