

Love that Stoops is Grace

Once at a dinner party that famed American novelist William Faulkner was attending, a polite man pulled a dining chair out for one of the women who, busy talking with other guests, was unaware that he had done so.

She fell to the floor, surprised and chagrined.

Describing the incident, Larry Levinger in his book *The Prophet Faulkner*, said that Faulkner sat down on the floor with the woman. “The gesture – noble, tender, humane – was much in character,” Levinger wrote. “Faulkner could not abide harm or diminishment. He preferred to get on the floor with the fallen. That’s where he found his muse.”

If you have ever traveled to a foreign country that still honors royalty (like England or Spain), you may have observed the occasional moment when a member of the royal family stops to touch or bless a commoner. “There is nothing in the commoner that deserves being noticed or touched or blessed by the royal family,” said Pastor Chuck Swindoll in his book *The Grace Awakening*, “but because of grace in the heart of the royal, there is the desire at that moment to pause, to stoop, to touch, even to bless.”

Then Swindoll asks: “What exactly is grace?”

You may be surprised to know that Jesus never used the word itself, Dr. Swindoll said. “He just taught it and, equally important, He lived it. Furthermore, the Bible never gives us a one-statement definition of it. Understanding what grace means requires our going back to an old Hebrew term that meant ‘to bend, to stoop.’ By and by, it came to include the idea of ‘condescending favor.’”

The late pastor and Bible scholar Donald Barnhouse perhaps said it best: “Love that goes upward is worship; love that goes outward is affection; love that stoops is grace.”

(Jesus) Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage; rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6-8 NIV).

If that isn’t stooping – if that isn’t grace – nothing is!

– Beecher Hunter

