

New Hope Sermon August 14 Wrap God's grace around your heart

### **Introduction**

One of the reasons why I appreciate the Passion Translation is the picture words used which seed the text in my mind and imagination. So it is with Prov. 20:22: "Wrap God's grace around your heart." The context is a preventive for taking vengeance when someone has wronged you, but the concept extends beyond that to a daily lifestyle.

"Wrap God's grace around your heart."

### **Unwrapping the function of wrapping**

What pictures does this wrapping analogy bring to your mind? I think of four.

First, there's gift wrapping. I know people whose artistry in gift wrapping makes the gift seem very special even before the recipient of the gift opens the present. The gift wrapping is a touch of beauty, and of love. This enhances the gift-giving and signals the preciousness of the friendship and the gift.

Then, there is also wrapping for protection:

When you wrap something up, you usually secure it, you keep moisture in or keep negative things out. When we visited Bruce and Becky on the mission field in Indonesia, they had many of their food staples (i.e., flour, sugar, any sweet bakery products etc.) all wrapped or sealed or enclosed in containers to prevent the ants from getting in and destroying them. Ever experienced that in your life in the tropics?



Or, ever moved or had to ship something precious? Wrapping belongings for protection was our *modus operandi* these past two years. In our last move, we bought tons of bubble wrap-type products (bubble wrap, stretch wrap, mattress bags, moving blankets, packing tape, bubble cushion, etc.) to protect our belongings. We wrapped everything, a whole chair, for example, and the individual legs of that chair. We wrapped pictures in bubble wrap several times around the entire picture. We put things in moving boxes and then secured those boxes with extra strong moving tape. (Sometimes when we went to unpack some boxes and small items, it seemed like someone had used half a roll of the packing tape wrapped around the item!)

We wrapped and wrapped and wrapped everything to be sure nothing was damaged. And in all our moving, there was only one picture out of our entire inventory that suffered a small break in the corner of the glass. Apparently, it had not been wrapped securely enough. Bubble wrap and all the materials we used in wrapping is expensive, so in our current rented house, we have saved all those boxes and wrapping products for the next move! We have several large contractor-size garbage bags filled with the bubble wrap and bubble cushion we took off of furniture so we can use it again.)

Then there's wrapping for healing. Whether one has a broken bone or some other injured body part, it is most often wrapped with adhesive bandages, or a plaster cast, to keep the part immobile and protected so it can heal. The health industry has made plaster casts specifically for children or for people to write on to lessen the burden and assure that the cast is seen positively, not negatively. Though the wrapping is restrictive, it serves a broader more fundamental purpose and needs to be kept in place! Even with a surface infection, the wound is bandaged and wrapped carefully after the medicine is applied.

Finally, I thought of the phrase “It’s a wrap!” This phrase alerts everyone that the project is completed. It is used often in movie and set production. The task or sermon or project is finished; everything is in place.

### **Wrapping God’s grace around our hearts**

Now let’s apply that analogy to wrapping God’s grace around our hearts.

The words associated with wrapping convey security, safety, protection, healing, completion. And all these words apply wonderfully to God’s grace. When we wrap God’s grace around our hearts, there is new sense of security and safety in His presence. His Spirit works to bring us deep, on-going inner healing that is covered and protected by His grace. Christ has paid the price for our salvation and that work is finished. So we can rest in the assurance of being part of His family and under His care. He has wrapped us in His love and will keep us close to Him when we trust Him as we move forward under His guidance.

In fact, the *Daily Light* devotional reading for August 10 had this as its theme. The morning reading began:

- “My (Jesus’) prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.” (Jn.17:15)
- “I have kept you from sinning against me” (Gen. 20:6)
- “The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.” (2 Thess. 3:3)
- “To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forever more. Amen.” (Jude 24-25)
- “Whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.” (Prov. 29:25)

I had had a particularly stressful day on August the 9th and those words brought comfort and peace to my soul. God’s love wrapped around my heart was what I needed. I had also just read “The character of God is a tower of strength, for the lovers of God delight to run into his heart and be exalted on high.” (Prov. 18:10). I had run into His heart and He had welcomed me and wrapped his grace around my heart.

These are powerful words and a powerful image as we start the new school year and another year with the pandemic still raging. We need that assurance of security and safety with the Lord. We need to know He will strengthen us and protect us from the evil one. We need to rest in Him, wrapped up in His grace.

May we each find new peace as these realities become our daily portion. It’s a wrap, beloved. Amen.

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Here’s the hymn that pictures this security in the Lord.

Jesus I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art. I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee and Thy beauty fills my soul, for by Thy transforming power, Thou hast made me whole.

Oh how great Thy loving kindness, vaster, broader than the sea! Oh, how marvelous Thy goodness, lavished all on me! Yes, I rest in Thee, Beloved, know what wealth of grace is Thine. Know the certainty of promise, and have made it mine. (Words: Jean Pigott, music: J. Mountain)

I memorized this hymn in the early days after I became a Christian and these words continue to be a fountain of life and peace for me. Hallelujah!