

Cheap Grace: Have We Watered Down the Blood He Shed?

Shortly after my brother, Kevin, led me to the Lord in 1989, he introduced me to the music of Steve Camp.

There were many other great Christian pop artists at the time—like Mylon Le Fevre, White Heart, Michael W. Smith, Larnelle Harris, BeBe and CeCe Winans, Margaret Becker, Carman, Geoff Moore and the Distance (Am I taking anyone down memory lane?)—but, I believe there was a hidden purpose for my introduction to Steve Camp.

Steve had a raspy voice, and his songs certainly weren't as beautiful as some of those from Keith Green, Andrae Crouch, Sandi Patti or Twila Paris. But there was something about Steve's music that captivated me, enough for me to go out and buy his cassettes. I wanted to listen to his music over and over again, especially the cassette *One on One*, released in 1986.

Steve wrote or co-wrote 21 No. 1 singles and sold more than a million albums. Kevin once told me something about Steve Camp that has stuck with me to this day. He said, "A lot of people don't like him because he's straightforward and to the point about the gospel. He tells it like it is."

One read of the lyrics from his song, "Cheap Grace," will show you why:

*I feel sick when I look at the sin in my life
I can't take it any longer
All along I've known what to do what is right
But my heart wasn't stronger*

Why do I do the things I don't want to do?
Do you ever feel the same way?

Like sin has got its hold over you
You try to stop but you just can't walk away

Why do I listen to the teaching that tickles my ears?
How they play on my emotions
How can they laugh at the truth in tears?
There's no call for my devotion

Am I man enough to face the truth?
Do you ever feel the same way?
Like the world has got its hold on you
You try to stop but you just can't walk away

Cheap grace, we've watered down the blood He shed
We say we've given all
But we have hardly bled

Cheap grace, you know it cost Him everything
It's easy to abuse
What you think is for free

And then there is "Hell Is Burning While the Church Is Asleep":

*Oh we're stuck in our pews as they're dying in our streets.
You know, hell is burning while the church is asleep.*

So why do you think that those lyrics would resonate with someone who had just come to know the Lord? Could it be that was exactly the kind of life I was living? Our salvation cost Jesus His life in a brutal way. We abuse it because we think it is for free; many times we tend to take the cross for granted, don't we?

It took many, many years to straighten my life out—a lot of wasted years I could have been diligently serving Him. But then that's what the grace of the cross is all about—it's never too late (unless you've died) to repent, ask for His forgiveness and come back to your heavenly Father.

One song that particularly resonated with me is Steve's song "Stranger to Holiness." One verse reads:

*Looks like the boy's in trouble again
Living much too close to the edge of sin
Now he finds himself where he should not have been
Oh, God, why is Your peace so hard to find
And the answer to the questions that haunt my mind?*

To me, Steve Camp was an artist ahead of his time. The cultural commentaries he made through his music, I believe, would ring even more true today. Take, for instance, these lyrics from "The Great American Novel":

*We are far across the ocean, in a war that's not our own
And while you're winning theirs, we're gonna lose the one at home*

Do you really think the only way to bring about the peace
Is to sacrifice your children, and kill all your enemies?

The politicians all make speeches, while the news men all take notes
And they exaggerate the issues, as they shove them down our throats

Is it really up to them whether this country sinks or floats
Well, I wonder who would lead us, if none of us would vote."

Not only did Steve make cultural commentaries, but he also sang of the power of the cross and God's saving grace. In his song "He's All You Need," he wrote:

*When you give in, to that familiar sin
He is all you need
Guilt has you paralyzed, it slowly eats you alive
He is all you need*

*He'll be faithful to you, though your heart is untrue
And your love's grown cold*

*His forgiveness is real
It'll comfort and heal
Your sin-weary soul*

*God loves you so
He'll never let you go
He is all you need.*

To me, that's all powerful stuff—relevant cultural commentary, the meaning of grace and the reality of God's forgiveness. Wow.

Through the past 27 years, I would say that I haven't gone more than a month or two where I haven't listened to some of his music. I owe that to my brother, and I'm grateful for it.

I invite you to listen to some of Steve's songs and see if they resonate with you. You can buy them on Amazon or on iTunes. I'd like to know what you think. I believe they will bless you. Who knows? They might, with the Holy Spirit's help, even convict you.

And as I always like to say, "there is that." {eoa}