

## THE GOOD NEWS OF GRACE

- A. Introduction: Since the beginning of the year I've been encouraging you to become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament. If you're already doing it, keep at it.
1. To read regularly means to read often, for short periods of time (10-15 minutes). To read systematically means to read each New Testament book as it was written to be read—beginning to end, over and over.
    - a. You're reading to get familiar with the text. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular, repeated reading. This type of reading also helps you see the context of verses.
    - b. Through regular reading you get to know Jesus. The New Testament documents were all written by eyewitnesses of Jesus—men who interacted with Him when He was on earth.
  2. Getting to know Jesus through the pages of the New Testament is important, not only for the sake of your relationship with Him, but also for protection against religious deception. Jesus warned that prior to His second coming false christs and false prophets will arise and deceive many. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
    - a. This deception will culminate in a worldwide acceptance of a false Messiah, commonly known as the Antichrist (many lessons for another day). Matt 24:15; II Thess 2:3-12; Rev 13
      1. Right now, multitudes of voices are proclaiming all kinds of information about Jesus—who He is and why He came into this world. Much of it inaccurate and some of it is devilish.
      2. No one is immune from deception (believing falsehoods). You need to know for yourself—from the eyewitness accounts—who Jesus is and why He came to this world.
    - b. Regular reading builds a view of reality in your mind, a kind of a mental framework through which you can assess information about Jesus and what it means to live as a follower of Jesus.
      1. It is possible to become familiar enough with the New Testament that you begin to recognize that what you just read or heard about Jesus is or isn't consistent with the eyewitness reports.
      2. Although you may not be able to rattle off ten verses in rebuttal, you get to the point where you can confidently say: There's nothing like that in the New Testament, and it contradicts New Testament themes about who Jesus is and why He came to earth. Therefore, I reject it.
  3. Last week looked at a statement John the apostle made that helps us understand why Jesus came and have more to say tonight. John wrote that grace and truth have come to us through Jesus. John 1:14-17
- B. Before resuming our discussion of grace and truth we need to review some points about the nature of God. Some of the confusion about who Jesus is (God or man) comes from misunderstanding the nature of God.
1. When we look at the sum total of all that the New Testament tells us about Jesus, we see that He is God become man without ceasing to be God. He is fully God and fully man, one Person with two natures.
    - a. This is beyond our comprehension—how God could become man without ceasing to be God. But the men who walked and talked with Jesus (the eyewitnesses) weren't bothered by it. None of them tried to explain it. They simply accepted it based on what they saw and heard from Jesus.
    - b. The Bible reveals that God is one God who simultaneously manifests as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Word (the Son), and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are distinct but not separate. They co-inhere or share one divine nature.
  2. This revelation is referred to as the doctrine of the Trinity. Although the word Trinity is not found in the Scriptures, the teaching (or doctrine) is found in both the Old and New Testament. The name Trinity comes from two Latin words, *tri* (three) and *unis* (one)—three in one.
    - a. God is not one God who manifests in three ways, sometimes as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Holy Spirit. You can't have one without the other. The Father is all God. So are the Word (the Son) and the Holy Spirit.
      1. They are not separate Gods. The Bible (Old Testament and New) clearly states that there is only one God. Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5; Isa 45:21; Gal 3:20; I Tim 2:5; James 2:19; etc.

2. All possess and demonstrate the characteristics, qualities, and abilities of God—omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, eternity, holiness. All are and do what only God is and can do.
  3. This is beyond our comprehension since we are talking about the Infinite God Who is eternal and without limits, and we are finite beings. All efforts to explain the nature of God fall short.
- b. The New Testament uses the word Godhead to refer to God's nature (Acts 17:29; Rom 1:20; Col 2:9). The Greek word translated Godhead means Deity or God, the Divine nature.
1. Each member of the Godhead took a specific role in redemption (securing our salvation from sin). The Father sent the Son to die for sin. The Son willingly came to earth to die. After He returned to Heaven the Holy Spirit came to apply the benefits of salvation to all who believe.
  2. One of the New Testament passages that uses the word Godhead directly refers Jesus—For in Him the whole fullness of Deity (the Godhead), continues to dwell in bodily form—giving complete expression of the divine nature (Col 2:9, Amp).
    - A. The point for our discussion is that not only did the eyewitnesses make no effort to explain how Jesus could be both God and man, they made no effort to explain the nature of God.
    - B. They accepted Jesus' statements about Himself and the Father and the Holy Spirit, and they obeyed His command to proclaim the news of His resurrection in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. John 14:16-17; 26; John 16:13-15; Matt 28:19
- C. Back to grace and truth. Jesus is God's clearest, fullest revelation of Himself to mankind (Heb 1:1-3; John 1:18; etc.). Jesus reveals God's grace and truth. To appreciate what this means we must consider the big picture or the overall plan of God for mankind.
1. Let's review. Before time began God, motivated by love, devised a plan to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters. But sin has disqualified humanity for God's family.
    - a. Because of Adam's sin, all humans are born with a nature contrary to God, and when we are old enough to know right from wrong, we willfully express that nature in acts of disobedience to God.
      1. Although God loves men and women, He cannot overlook sin and still be true to His holy, righteous nature. The right and just penalty for sin is eternal separation from God (also known as the second death). But if the penalty is enforced, humanity can't fulfill its created purpose and God loses His family.
      2. There is nothing that human beings can do to satisfy justice in a way that frees us from the ultimate penalty of sin. Good works aren't enough. Massive amounts of physical and mental suffering are not enough. There's nothing we can do to fix our problem.
    - b. However, Almighty God devised a way to do for sinful humanity what we can't do for ourselves. He found a way to save us from the penalty and power of sin and bring us into His family without violating His own holy, righteous nature. Rom 5:6
      1. Two thousand years ago God (the Word, Jesus) took on a human nature and was born into this world. He became man so that He could die as a sacrifice for sin on our behalf (Heb 2:14-15). Because He is God, the value of His person is such that He could satisfy Justice on our behalf.
      2. John, an eyewitness wrote: This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins (I John 4:10, NLT). The Greek word that is translated sacrifice means an expiation. To expiate means to atone for, to pay the penalty for (the King James Version translates the word as propitiation).
    - c. Jesus' incarnation and death is an expression of God's grace. When the word grace is used in connection with mankind's condition due to sin and God's remedy for it, grace refers to the unmerited or unearned favor of God. Eph 2:8-9
      1. The word emphasizes the disposition of the one expressing grace. Grace isn't extended because of something in the one who receives it, but because of the one who expresses it.

2. Grace is the favor and goodwill of God expressed through Jesus. Grace is a demonstration of God's kindness and love. God saved us from sin and made us sons and daughters, not because of anything we ourselves did, but because of His purpose and grace, given to us through Jesus before time began. Titus 3:5-7; II Tim 1:9-10
2. Paul, one of Jesus' most dynamic and effective eyewitnesses, stated that Jesus commissioned him to "give witness to others about the good news (gospel) of God's grace" (Acts 20:24, NLT). Consider these examples of what Paul preached about the grace of God expressed through Jesus.
- a. Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is a systematic explanation of God's plan and how He accomplishes it through the Cross of Christ. Paul opened the epistle with greetings to the readers and then began to remind them of what God by His grace has provided through Jesus.
  - b. Eph 1:4-5—Before God created the heavens and the earth he chose men and women to be adopted as children (the Greek word adopt means place as adult sons). The word "signifies the place and condition of son that given to one to whom it does not naturally belong" (*Vine's Dictionary*).
    1. Through Jesus and His sacrifice at the Cross, God opened the way for sinners to become sons and daughters through faith in Christ "and (this) plan gave him great pleasure" (Eph 1:5, NLT).
    2. Paul makes it clear this good news is based on grace. Eph 1:7-8—It is through him (Jesus) that we are redeemed (delivered from sin), freely forgiven through that full and generous grace which has overflowed into our lives and opened our eyes to the truth (J. B. Phillips).
  - c. Eph 2:5—Even when we were dead in our many sins, he united us to the very life of Christ and saved us by his wonderful grace (TPT).
    1. When we believe on Jesus we are born of God—we receive His uncreated life (*zoe*) in our inner inner being and we are born of Him. Our nature is changed from sinner into holy, righteous son or daughter. John 1:12-13; II Cor 5:17-18; etc.
    2. The entrance of God's life and Spirit is the beginning of a process of transformation that will ultimately fully restore every part of our being to the person we were meant to be before sin corrupted the family (many lessons for another day).
3. Paul described the impact of God's plan on all who believe on Jesus, or acknowledge Him as Savior and Lord and trust Him as the only source of salvation from sin). God's gracious plan inspires us to praise Him, and it provides us with a purpose and position we could never attain by our own efforts.
- a. Eph 1:6—(The plan results) in praise of the glory of His grace by which he has taken us into his favour in the person of his beloved Son (Knox); which has made us welcome in the everlasting love he bears toward the Beloved (J.B. Phillips).
  - b. The word translated taken into His favor and made us welcome is a form of the Greek word for grace. The word is used for favor on the part of the giver and thanks (gratitude) on the part of the receiver. God's grace expressed toward us makes us grateful.
- D. Rom 5:2—Paul wrote this about grace in another epistle: Through faith in Jesus we have received God's grace. In that grace we stand (NirV); Through Him also we have [our] access (entrance, introduction) by faith into this grace—state of God's favor—in which we [firmly and safely] stand (Amp). What does it mean to stand in God's favor? Consider these thoughts.
1. Because of what God's grace has done for us, when we believe on Jesus and His sacrifice, we are given the same standing before God that Jesus as a Man (in His humanity) had.
    - a. Because of the Cross and the new birth, we stand before God as a holy, righteous son (or daughter). Like Jesus, we can approach Almighty God as Abba Father. Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6
      1. Abba is an Aramaic word. When the Jews returned to Israel from their captivity in Babylon, they brought the Aramaic language with them. Abba was a personal name used by children in addressing their father. Slaves were forbidden to address the head of the house by this name.

2. In the New Testament Abba is always joined with the word Father. Abba expresses the trust of a child for its father. Father expresses an intelligent understanding of the relationship.

b. Jesus is not only the procurer of the family He (in His humanity) is the pattern for the family. God wants sons like Jesus. Rom 8:29—For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters (NLT).

1. Remember, Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. While on earth Jesus did not live as God. He lived as a man in dependence on God as His Father.

2. While on earth Jesus showed us what relationship between the Father and His sons and daughters looks like. Jesus knew that His Father was with Him and for Him. His Father heard His prayers and met His needs (lessons for another day).

3. The night before He went to the Cross Jesus prayed for those who would believe on Him through the words of the eyewitnesses (lessons for another day). But note one statement in Jesus' prayer: (that) the world will know that you sent me and will understand that you love them as much as you love me (John 17:23, NLT).

c. Paul wrote in another epistle: Let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it (Heb 4:16, NLT).

1. Even after we are saved from the penalty and power of sin, we can't earn or deserve God's help.

We can only receive it. You may wonder, aren't we supposed to do good works? Yes!

2. However, our good works are not an effort to earn God's help and blessing. They are an outward expression of what we are as sons and daughters of God, who are in the process of becoming increasing Christlike in thought, word, and action (lessons for another day).

3.

Note what Jesus said. In the context of receiving eternal life from God, a crowd of people asked Him: What must we do to be doing the works of God? Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (John 6:28-29, ESV).

2. People mistakenly think that good circumstances are an expression of God's favor toward them and that bad circumstances mean He is displeased with them for some reason (they are disfavored).

a. The word favor, when used in connection with God, expresses the idea of the goodwill that God extends toward man. Ps 5:12—For you, O Lord, bless the just (righteous) man; you surround him with the shield of your goodwill (favor) (NAB).

b. The fact that we stand in God's grace (favor) doesn't mean everything goes right for us. There's no such thing as a problem free life in this sin damaged world. Jesus Himself said in this world we will have "tribulation and trials and distress and frustration" (John 16:33, Amp).

1. This doesn't mean that there is no help for us in this life. God has already helped you with your greatest need—salvation from sin. And everything else is a lesser issue. Rom 8:32

2. However, there is no easy path through a sin damaged world. And many problems are not easily or quickly solved. But God's promise to those who are part of His plan is that He will work it all for good and cause it to serve His ultimate purpose for a family. Rom 8:28

3. Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. God's grace (favor) revealed through Jesus, gives us greater insight into the truth of His love and goodness, and His plan for men and women.

a. God is working to restore the family and the family home. And nothing can stop God's plan for a family on this earth (renewed and restored) from coming to pass. Rev 21-22

b. Because of God's grace expressed through the Cross, we stand in God's favor and have a place in the family and the family home. That's our hope in the midst of life's hardships; it's all temporary.

E. Conclusion: Grace and favor are expressions of God's love. Nothing can separate us from God's love, the motive that inspired and executed the plan, the love through the Cross of Christ (Rom 8:39). And that's the good news good news of His grace!! More next week!!