

## GRACE THROUGH FAITH

- A. Introduction: We are talking about the importance of getting to know Jesus as He truly is, according to the Bible—especially the New Testament.
1. The New Testament was written by eyewitnesses of Jesus who walked and talked with Him—men who saw Him die and then saw Him alive again. They were willing to suffer and die based on what they saw.
    - a. Knowing what the eyewitnesses reported is particularly important right now. We live in a time when there are many competing and contradictory voices declaring who Jesus is and what His mission was. Social media has increased their impact and taken these voices to a whole new level.
    - b. The people who actually knew Jesus made it clear that Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God—one person with two natures, human and divine. John 1:1-3; John 1:14; I John 1:1-3; etc.
      1. The eyewitnesses reported that Jesus came to die as a sacrifice for sin so men and women can be restored to their created purpose through faith in Him. Eph 1:4-5; John 1:12-13; I John 4:9-10
      2. They wrote that Jesus will come again to cleanse this earth of all sin, corruption, and death, renew and restore the planet, and establish the kingdom of God on earth. Rev 21-22
  2. John 1:14-17—For the last several weeks we’ve been examining a statement recorded by John, one of Jesus’ twelve apostles. John was a close associate throughout Jesus’ ministry. John wrote that grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We have more to say about grace in tonight’s lesson.
- B. God created men and women to be His holy, righteous sons and daughters. However, all men are guilty of sin before God and as a result, lost to our created purpose. The penalty of sin is eternal separation from God.
1. There is nothing we can do to free ourselves from this condition. No amount of good works or suffering on our part is enough to erase the guilt of sin and restore us to God and our created purpose.
    - a. Before God created us He knew that humanity would choose independence from Him through sin. But this gave the Lord an opportunity to display a beautiful aspect of His character—grace.
    - b. The word grace (*charis*) is used several ways in the New Testament. When used in connection with mankind’s condition and God’s remedy grace refers to the unearned or unmerited favor of God.
      1. The Cross of Christ is an expression of God’s grace. Through the Cross God did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He paid the penalty for our sin so that can become His holy, righteous sons and daughters, instead of being forever separated from Him.
      2. At the Cross Jesus took the penalty for our sin on Himself and satisfied the claims of Divine Justice against us. When a sinner acknowledges Jesus as Savior, God justifies or acquits that person. To acquit means to drop all charges for lack of evidence.
        - A. Col 2:14—He has utterly wiped out the written evidence of broken commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it to the Cross (J. B. Phillips).
        - B. Rom 3:23-24—For we have all sinned and are in need of the glory of God. Yet through his powerful declaration of acquittal, God freely gives away his righteousness. His gift of love and favor now cascades over us, all because Jesus, the Anointed One, has liberated us from the guilt, punishment, and power of sin (TPT).
  2. Grace emphasizes the disposition of the one expressing grace. Grace is given, not because of something in the one who receives it, but because of the character of the one who expresses it.
    - a. Grace is an expression of God’s love. Some translations render the Greek word *charis* as loving kindness or gracious kindness (like the one above, Rom 3:24, TPT), as His gift of love and favor.
    - b. The Greek word that is translated freely in Rom 3:24 literally means gratuitously, or given without charge or payment. The emphasis in the Greek is on the grace of the giver.
      1. I Pet 2:3—God is gracious. The Greek word used here literally means useful or providing

what is needed. It means useful toward others or good, kind, benevolent.

2. Luke 6:35—God is kind, even to the unthankful and the evil, because that’s who He is. The word kind in this verse is the same word translated gracious in I Pet 2:3.
  3. Eph 2:8-9—God’s grace and the effects of His grace expressed at the Cross come to us through faith. When we believe what God has done for us through the Cross of Christ, we are saved from sin by His grace through our faith.
    - a. This passage contrasts works with grace. Works is anything we do to earn or deserve. Salvation is a gift. It can’t be earned, only received. Then, all the credit or glory for our salvation goes to God.
    - b. We receive salvation (provided by God’s grace) by believing. There is no glory to us for our faith. We earn nothing through our faith because faith comes from Him.
      1. Faith (and believe) come from a word that means persuasion. Faith in God is belief or trust in Him—His goodness, truthfulness, reliability and faithfulness. When we see Him as He is—His love, goodness, faithfulness—we become persuaded that we can trust Him. Ps 9:10
      2. Faith comes from God in the sense that as we get to know Him through His Word trust develops. Jesus is the Living Word and the Bible, the written Word of God.
        - A. Rom 10:17—Faith can only come from hearing the message, and the message is the word of Christ (J. B. Phillips); Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ (NIV).
        - B. Jesus—the Living Word of God revealed in and through the written Word—is the source of our faith. Jesus is the source and perfecter of our faith. Heb 12:2
  4. Most Christians understand that they did not earn their salvation from sin through their efforts. But, once saved from sins’ penalty by God’s grace, far too many of us begin to relate to God by our works.
    - a. We approach God like this: Surely He will help me because I’ve prayed enough, given enough, suffered enough. Or, He won’t help me because I don’t pray enough, I get angry when I shouldn’t, or I did a lot of bad things before I was a Christian and I still fail now.
    - b. You must understand that everything we receive from God both before and after we are saved is a grace, an expression of grace. Healing, provision, protection, deliverance, strength are all expressions of God’s grace—His unearned loving kindness, loving favor.
      1. If God, because He is gracious, helped you by His grace with your greatest need on your worst day, why would He be unwilling to help you now? Your worst day was any day before you bowed your knee to Jesus. Your greatest need is salvation from the penalty and power of sin.
      2. Rom 8:32—He who did not grudge his own Son but gave him up for us all—can we not trust such a God to give us, with him, everything else that we need (J. B. Phillips).
    - c. Heb 4:16—So 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 (TPT).
- C. Last week we pointed out that we struggle with grace for several reasons. On the one hand, our fallen flesh wants to earn and deserve so that we get the credit. On the other hand, we struggle with believing that God actually cares about us and would be willing to help. Let’s look at two incidents from Jesus’ ministry that give us insight our value and worth and the relationship between grace and faith.
1. Luke 15:1-32—When religious leaders criticized Jesus for eating with sinners He told three parables.
    - a. Jesus talked about a lost sheep and a lost coin and described how the owners searched diligently until they found the lost items. Then they rejoiced with friends and neighbors.
      1. Next Jesus talked about a son who left his father’s house and spent his inheritance on sinful living. When he ended up living in a pigpen, the son remembered his father’s character, came to his senses (repented), and returned home. His father welcomed him and threw a party.
      2. Each parable expresses the point that lost items don’t lose their value when they are lost. Jesus

made it clear through His words that these sinners that I eat with still have value to their Creator.

I have come to seek and save them so that their value can be realized (Luke 19:10). And all of Heaven rejoices when a lost son or daughter is found.

b. There are many important points in each parable (lessons for another time). But notice that in the parable of the lost son we see the son trying to relate to his father through works.

1. v20—The father ran to greet his son and warmly welcomed him back with demonstrable expressions of love. He was moved with deep compassion and kissed him and kissed him.

2. v21—The son's first words to his father were: I am no longer worthy (deserving, suitable) to be called your son. Make me a servant.

3. v22-24—The father welcomed him as though he never sinned and cleansed him, and restored him as a son in his house. The son wasn't welcomed back based on his works, but on his father's love and goodness (his grace).

4. What if the prodigal son refused to come into the house and then set himself up in the servants' quarters? He would not have experienced all the blessedness of being back in father's house.

c. There was another son in the family. He was not present when the prodigal came home. The elder brother returned to find a gala celebration underway and refused to go into the house. v25-28

1. He was angry about the grace shown his brother: How many years have I worked like a slave for you, performing every duty you've asked as a faithful son (v29, TPT)? Where's my party?

2. His father replied: My son, you are always with me by my side. Everything I have is yours to enjoy (v31, TPT). It's right to rejoice over your brother, He was lost and now is found (v32).

3. Instead of being grateful for what he had, this son was angry over someone who got something they didn't deserve. His attitude actually blinded him to his father's goodness and provision.

4. We're all naturally self-focused. If you don't learn to recognize and deal with this trait, you'll end up frustrated and angry. Focusing on self and what we don't have keeps us from seeing what is ours. The elder brother mentioned himself five times in one sentence and each

statement he made about his father was inaccurate (v29).

2. Matt 14:23-33—We get insight into the relationship between God's grace and our faith in the incident where Peter walked on water by the power of God. It took place after Jesus multiplied food for a crowd.

a. At the end of the day, Jesus told His disciples to return by boat to Capernaum on the other side of the Sea of Galilee (about four miles as the crow flies) while He went off by Himself to pray. After the men were on their way, a wind storm blew up and waves began to break over the ship.

1. Why was there a storm? Was God behind it? No. That's life in a fallen world. Due to the geography of the land surrounding the sea, sudden wind storms are fairly common.

2. In the fourth watch of the night (3:00-6:00 am) Jesus came walking toward them on the water. When they saw Him they thought it was a spirit (ghost) and were afraid. He spoke to them: Fear not, it is I. The Greek says I Am (*ego emi*), the name God gave to Moses in Ex 3:14.

3. Peter called out: If it's really you, tell me to come to you by walking on the water. Jesus said, come on (v28-29, NLT). Peter got out of the boat and walked toward Jesus. However, when he looked at the waves around him, he was terrified and began to sink. Jesus saved him (v31).

b. Keep in mind that this incident is not a Sunday School story or some good sermon material. It involved real people. Jesus was trying to teach these men something in the moment.

1. Peter had no ability in himself to walk on water. It was clearly God's power that enabled Peter to do so. In other words, Jesus, out of kindness, did for Peter what he could not do for himself. This is an expression of grace.

2. As long as Peter kept his attention on Jesus he was able to do what he could not do in himself. When he was distracted by the waves, he became afraid and started to sink.

c. Jesus called what happened doubt, or little faith (v31). Faith is trust in God. Doubt is from a word

that means to stand in two ways and implies uncertainty over which way to go. The lesson here is: Keep your focus on Me and I will do for you, in you, through you, what you can't do.

1. Jesus was preparing these men for what was ahead. As eyewitness who will carry the good news of His resurrection to the world, they're going to encounter all kinds of storms that they are powerless against in and of themselves—circumstances that will take their focus off of Him.
2. They will need to learn to keep their focus on and live their lives in dependence on Jesus. They need to become persuaded that God, by His grace, will help them as they trust in Him.
3. We struggle with God's grace because we don't recognize our value to God and the reason He created us. But we struggle with faith because we try to have faith without focusing on the source of faith—Jesus.
  - a. Since faith is by definition trust in someone or something, it must have an object. Faith or confidence in the object of your faith comes from what you know about him or it.
  - b. Faith in God comes from learning about Him and keeping your attention (focus) on Him as He truly is through His clearest revelation of Himself—the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the New Testament.
    1. Sadly, a lot of the teaching in the Church over the past several decades has put the focus on our faith rather than on God's goodness as revealed in Jesus.
    2. We hear sermons about how to put our faith to work or what we must do to exercise faith. Faith becomes a technique we utilize to get what we want, rather than the result of focusing on God.
  - c. Each of the statements below deserves an entire lesson (some other time). For now, just notice that in each of these statements about faith the focus on what we have to do rather than who Jesus is.
    1. Mark 5:25-34—A woman with an issue of blood heard of Jesus and followed Him, saying, if I touch His clothes, I'll be healed. We've made this incident about the words she said rather than where she focused her attention. So we focus on saying the right words over and over.
    2. She touched Him and was healed. When Jesus said her faith made her whole (34), He was referring to her trust in Him. Her words were an expression of trust that came from what she knew about Jesus and where she focused her attention.
    3. We've heard that we're supposed to believe we receive what we want before we see, and then we'll have it. So our focus is on "I believe I have received" (whatever that means) instead of on I believe He will help me. The focus is on me and what I am doing rather than on Jesus.
4. We mentioned this final point last week and have more to say next week. For now consider one point. We also struggle with grace and faith because we mistakenly think that receiving God's grace through our faith means we can fix or change all the unpleasant circumstances in our lives.
  - a. There's no such thing as a problem free life in this world. Jesus said that in this world we'll have tribulation, moths and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal. John 16:33; Matt 6:19
  - b. Troubles and trials are not expressions of God's disfavor, His greater or lesser love for you, or of your deservingness or undeservingness. They are part of life in a sin damaged, sin cursed world.
    1. Although our hearts are back in Father's house through repentance and faith in Christ, we still live in the pigpen. And there are constant challenges as a result. Mud gets splashed on us and other pigs knock into us (lessons for another day).
    2. God has not promised to clean up the pigpen yet. In connection with Jesus' second coming, the Lord will cleanse and transform this earth, restoring it to its pre-sin condition. Every trace of the pigpen will be gone, and life will finally be what it is supposed to be. Rev 21-22

D. Conclusion: God reveals His grace through His Word and faith comes to us through His Word. The best thing you can do for yourself is to become a regular reader of the New Testament. Not only will it persuade you of God's grace—His goodness and willingness to help, it will root out issues in you that keep you from fully trusting God. All God asks from us is that we believe what He shows us and tells us. Trust (faith) grows in us as we get to know Him through His Word. Much more next week!