

## LIVE BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the connection between God's grace and our faith as part of a larger series on getting to know Jesus as He is revealed in the New Testament. The twenty-seven documents that make up the New Testament documents were written by eyewitnesses of Jesus, or close associates of eyewitnesses.
1. John 1:14-16—One of those eyewitnesses, John (an original apostle) wrote that Jesus is full of grace, that grace came through Jesus, and we that have received grace upon grace. Recently we've been looking at what the New Testament says about grace and how it has come to us through Jesus.
    - a. Grace is an expression of God's love. Grace is God's unearned, undeserved favor or kindness. The Greek word for grace (*charis*) is sometimes translated as loving kindness or gracious kindness.
    - b. The word emphasizes the disposition of the one expressing grace. Grace is not given because of something in the one who receives it, but because of the character of the one who expresses it. God is gracious. I Pet 2:3
  2. Human beings have a problem that we can't fix. We're guilty of sin before God, Who is holy. As a result, we're disqualified for our created purpose (sonship and relationship with God) and destined for eternal separation from God (Eph 1:4-5; Rom 3:23; Rom 6:23; etc.). But God has been gracious to us.
    - a. Through the Cross of Christ He did for us what we can't do for ourselves. God paid the penalty for our sin so that we can become His sons and daughters through faith in Him. The Cross is an expression of God's grace. John 3:16; Eph 1:7; Rom 3:24-26
      1. We can't do anything to earn or deserve what the Cross provides. 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, we're saved from sin's penalty and power by His grace through our faith. Eph 2:8-9
      2. Even after we are restored to the family, God continues to work in our lives by His grace through our faith. Everything we receive from God both before and after we are saved from sin's penalty and power is an expression of His grace. Heb 4:16
    - b. Faith is trust in or assured reliance on someone or something. Faith in God is trust in God. Trust is assured reliance on God—His power, His truthfulness, His faithful.
      1. Because faith is trust in someone or something, it must have an object. In other words, it must be directed at someone or something. The object of our faith is Jesus, God Incarnate. Heb 12:2
      2. The Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to us in and through the pages of the Bible. As we get to know Him through His Word we become persuaded that we can trust Him. Our actions and words then reflect that trust, and we begin to live our lives by faith in Him. Ps 9:10; Rom 10:17
  3. There's a lot of misunderstanding about faith—what it is, how it works. Much of the popular teaching over in the last few decades has made faith the object of our faith—what I must do to get my miracle.
    - a. If your only source of information about faith was the New Testament you would never talk about faith the way many of us do—act your faith; see yourself well; keep saying what you want until you see it; just stand on the promise. Our focus is on the techniques we use rather than on Jesus.
      1. Abraham and Sarah were commended for their faith. By God's grace, through their faith, they had a son when they were too old to produce children. Heb 11:11; Rom 4:20-21; Gen 15-21
      2. When we read the historical record of their lives we find that their faith was not in a promise that was disconnected from God. Their faith or trust was in the One Who made the promise.
    - b. Many of us try to have faith without looking at the object of our faith—Jesus. One of the greatest benefits of regular, systematic reading of the New Testament (cover to cover, over and over) is that it will produce in you an unshakeable trust or faith in Jesus. And, you will begin to live by faith.
  4. Paul the apostle, another eyewitness of Jesus, wrote that he lived by faith in the Son of God. In this lesson we're going to look at what Paul meant when he said that he lived by faith. Gal 2:20

- B. Jesus appeared to Paul a number of times after His resurrection and personally instructed Paul (Gal 1:11-12). Paul actually wrote 2/3s of the New Testament documents. We've used some of the statements he made about God's grace through faith in our lessons on grace and faith. Rom 3:23-25; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; etc.
1. Paul was a master at living by God's grace through faith. We said last week that he understood that his circumstances were not an expression of God's greater or lesser love or approval. He knew that problems (minor to major) are part of life in a fallen, sin damaged world. John 16:33; Matt 6:19; etc.
    - a. That information kept Paul's trust in the Lord from being undermined. Paul never had to wrestle with: Why is God letting this happen? What have I done wrong? Paul was able to answer his difficult circumstances with: That's life in a sin cursed earth, but God will get me through until He gets me out. Rom 8:35-39
    - b. Paul understood that faith in God does not stop problems from coming into our lives and knew that God by His grace gives peace, joy, hope, and strength in the midst of problems. II Cor 12:7-9
      1. You may recall that when Paul asked Jesus to stop a demonic being from stirring up trouble for him as he preached the gospel, Jesus told him, My grace is sufficient (enough) to empower you to deal with this. My strength (grace) is made perfect (reaches its intended goal) in weakness.
  2. Paul's reaction to the Lord's answer was: So now I am glad to boast about my weakness, so that the power of Christ may work through me (v9, NLT).
    - c. Paul's words were not a religious cliché. He was stating a spiritual reality. Paul knew that God was in him by His life and Spirit to strengthen and empower him to live this difficult life effectively.
2. In one of his epistles, Paul revealed that Jesus commissioned him to proclaim a previously unrevealed aspect of God's plan of redemption (His plan to deliver men and women from the penalty and power of sin)—union with Christ through shared life. Col 1:25-27.
- a. Before God created the human race, He knew that we would go into the pigpen of sin, corruption, and death. He devised a plan to deal with sin and transform sinners into His holy, righteous sons and daughters through the Cross, by His grace through our faith (redemption).
    1. The Cross was a means to an end. Through it, God satisfied justice (paid for sin) so that He could justify us (declare us not guilty) and then indwell us by His Spirit and life.
    2. Christianity is more than a set of creeds (beliefs) and moral codes (behaviors), although it has both. Christianity is supernatural. Christianity is an organic (living) relationship between God and man whereby we become partakers of the uncreated life in God through union.
      - A. Eph 1:5-6—For it was always his perfect plan to adopt us as his delightful children through our union with Jesus...so that his tremendous love would glorify his grace (TPT).
- B. Eph 2:5—Even when we were dead [slain] by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ—He gave us the very same life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him (Amp).
- b. The New Testament uses the terminology of new birth, born again, or born of the Spirit to picture what happens when a person acknowledges Jesus as Savior and Lord. John 1:12-13; John 3:3-6
    1. Spiritual (non-physical) life is imparted to them, in their innermost being. They are born of God because they receive His life. The Greek word for the life we receive from God is *zoe* or life as God has it (*Vine's Dictionary*).
      2. The New Testament uses three word pictures to convey the believer's relationship to Jesus through faith in Him. All depict union and shared life: Vine and branch (John 15:5); Head and body (Eph 1:22-23); Husband and wife (Eph 5:31-32).
        - A. The entrance of His life and Spirit is the beginning of a process of restoration that will ultimately restore every part of our being to what God intended before sin damaged the family—sons and daughters who are Christlike in every part of their being. Rom 8:29
        - B. Paul wrote that his goal in proclaiming union with Christ through shared life was to present

every man and woman to God perfect or “mature through union with Christ” (Col 1:28, Williams); “full-grown, fully initiated, complete and perfect—in Christ” (Col 1:28, Amp).

3. Paul himself recognized that God was working in him by His life and Spirit to empower him to accomplish this work. Col 1:29—For this I labor [unto weariness], striving with all the super human energy which He so mightily enkindles and works within me (Amp); I work very hard at this, as I depend on Christ’s mighty power within me (NLT).
3. Jesus died for sin to open the way for men and women to become literal sons and daughters of God by partaking of His nature through union and shared life. We don’t become little gods. We become sons of God by new or second birth.
  - a. At the Last Supper, the night before Jesus went to the Cross, He told His apostles that He was going to leave them. They didn’t yet know that He would be crucified, die for the sins of men, and rise again—or that the event was only hours away.
    1. Jesus told them that, at that day (following His resurrection), they would know that He is in them and they are in Him. John 14:20—At that time you will recognize that I am in union with the Father, and you with me, and I with you (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); So when that day comes, you will know that I am living in the Father and that you are one with me, for I will be living in you (TPT).
    2. Jesus told them He was going to send the Holy Spirit to them, and they would know “because he lives with you now and later will be in you” (John 14:17, NLT). My death and resurrection will make it possible for Me to indwell you by My Spirit, the Holy Spirit.
      - A. Jesus, in His humanity, is the pattern for God’s family. He lived as a man by the power of the Father in Him. In doing so He showed us what sons and daughters of God look like.
      - B. At the Last Supper Jesus said: Don’t you believe that the Father is living in me and that I am living in the Father? Even my words are not my own but come from my Father, for he lives in me and performs his miracles of power through me (John 14:10, TPT)
  - b. These statements get into the nature of God (a subject for another night). God is One God Who simultaneously manifests as three distinct Persons—the Father, the Word or Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible doesn’t explain God’s nature; it simply tells us about Him.
    1. This is beyond our comprehension—explaining the nature of the Infinite God and how He has chosen to interact with finite men and women. Note, the eyewitnesses made no effort to explain God’s triune nature or how we can be in union with Him.
    2. They simply accepted Jesus’ words about Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; 26; 16:13-15). And , and after Jesus authenticated everything He said by rising from the dead, they went out to proclaim what they saw and heard to the world, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Matt 28:19-20
4. John the apostle was present at this Last Supper. He is the one who wrote that Jesus is full of grace and truth and that we have all received of his fullness. John 1:14; 16
  - a. Paul gives more light on John’s statement in the same epistle where he wrote that he was called to proclaim union with Christ through shared life.
    1. Col 2:9-10—In Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Divinity, the Divine nature) bodily, and you are complete in Him. Fullness and complete are forms of the same Greek word. It means fullness, fulfillment, to fill up, to complete.
    2. Col 2:9-10—For he is the complete fullness of deity living in human form. And our own completeness is now found in him. We are completely filled with God as Christ’s fullness overflows within us (TPT).
  - b. Because of grace expressed at the Cross union with Christ through new birth is available. Through faith in Christ God is now in us by His life and Spirit to complete us, restore us, and empower us.
5. Paul lived with the awareness that God was in him by His Spirit and life to work in and strengthen him.

He had an expectation or trust (faith) that God in him would help him. Gal 2:20

- a. Gal 2:20—I have been crucified with Christ. I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me (NLT).
  1. Paul does not mean that he no longer exists. Paul understood that Jesus died in his place (for him as him). Paul wasn't on the Cross, but what happened there affects him as though he were there. The debt Paul owed for his sin was paid through his substitute. I'm not trusting in my own efforts to make myself right with God. I trust in Jesus and the Cross.
  2. Jesus didn't die to replace Paul. Jesus died to make it possible for Paul to be transformed from sinner into son and fully restored to his created purpose by Jesus' Spirit and life in him.
    - A. Paul understood that he died to his old life: Jesus died...so that all who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves...they will live to please Christ (II Cor 5:15)
    - B. Gal 2:20—My old identity has been co-crucified with Christ and no longer lives. And now the essence of this new life is no longer mine, for the Anointed One lives his life through me—we live in union as one (TPT).
- b. Gal 2:20—And the life I now live in this body I live by faith—by adherence to and reliance on and [complete] trust—in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me (Amp)
  1. Paul recognized that God expressed His love for him through the Cross. God met Paul's greatest need (salvation from sin) when Paul was his enemy. Rom 8:32
  2. Thus, Paul knew that God (now in him by His Spirit and life) would help him with everything else: My faith in the Son of God helps me to live my life in my body (Gal 2:20, NIV).
6. Paul lived and worked with the awareness that God is in us by His grace to work in and through us by His power—the same power that raised Christ from the dead. And he urged believers to do the same. His epistles (letters) are filled with statements about God at work in us. Consider just a few.
  - a. Eph 1:19-20—(I pray) [that you can know and understand] what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us...which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead (Amp).
  - b. Rom 8:11—Once the Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead lives within you he will, by that same Spirit, bring to your whole being, yes even your mortal bodies, new strength and vitality. For he now lives in you (J. B. Phillips).
  - c. Eph 3:16—May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the (Holy) Spirit [Himself]—indwelling your innermost being and personality (Amp).
  - d. Eph 3:20—Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope (NLT).

- C. Conclusion: We have more to say next week. Consider this closing thought. Paul lived with the awareness that God, by His grace, was in him by His Spirit and life. Paul knew that because of grace, he was united to life in Jesus as truly as a branch is joined to a vine. Paul didn't always feel it—but he believed it.
  1. This awareness and trust gave Paul confidence in the face of life's hardships: I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me—I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me (Phil 4:13, Amp).
  2. Paul's faith (trust) in Jesus grew as he got to know His Savior more fully. In the context of being more than a conqueror in the midst of life's troubles Paul wrote: I have come through a process of persuasion to the settled conclusion that (nothing) will be able to separate us (me) from the love (grace) of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38, Wuest).
  3. As you make Jesus the object of your faith, your trust in Him will grow. You'll become persuaded that the Healer, Provider, Comforter, and Strengthener is within you to help you, empower you, and change you for your good and His glory. You'll learn to live and walk by faith in the Son of God.