

The Significance of God's Grace

Introduction

Last week we concluded our “Who are you?” series where we realized that all those who have come to Christ are described with words like forgiven, free, befriended, and adopted.

- That is our condition – that is what is true of us.
- But I think most of you would agree with me that sometimes we don't live that way.
- In other words our conduct is not always consistent with our condition.
- We struggle to adopt that mindset and we struggle to live out those truths about our identity in the normal relationships of life.

So I think it is fair to ask this question:

- If I am free, if I am forgiven, if I am adopted
- Then why is that I struggle to live it out?
 - o Why do I get upset with the people who love me most in life?
 - Have you noticed that the people closest to you are the ones that can really frustrate you?
 - o Why do I get worried when I have seen God take care of me 100 times before?
 - When we first got married we lived on love!
 - We still live on love, but we also live with funds thanks to your generosity.
 - In those days we ate on \$25 a week ... I ate 2 lbs of “chip chopped ham” a week. That kind of lunch meat has been pulled from certain stores. I have heard that there are studies being conducted concerning the long term impact of eating who knows what that was! If God can provide in the midst of all that, why do I ever worry?
 - o Why do I spend my time very selfishly instead of being a help to others around me?
 - o Why do I spend my money so flippantly when there are so many good things surrounding the work and cause of Christ to put it toward?
 - o Why do I spend time complaining about things I don't like rather than give thanks for everything that is right?
 - o In other words, Why do I struggle living out what I know to be true?

While that question could be answered in several different ways, today we are going to answer that question in one word: Are you ready? Can you feel the tension rising? Is the tension dying because you have read the handout???? Grace.

We are going to study this morning the significance of Grace. I would like to demonstrate from the Word of God this morning that thinking about the impact of Grace on our lives can help us take the next step in our journey of walking with God and becoming like Jesus with joy.

With that in mind please turn in your Bibles to Titus 2:11-14. We want to unpack these four wonderful verses and then show how important they are in normal daily living.

- The last time I was given the pulpit we discussed freedom (free from the power of daily sin and the eternal penalty of sin and free to live for Christ ... Free From Free to). Today we are going to again have two basic points God's Grace Appears bringing salvation and God's Grace Instructs you how to live (or say it another way Grace Received...Grace Given).

[read the text]

I. God's Grace Appears Bringing Salvation (Grace Received)

Opening comments:

- The first is that this grace is not just any grace; it is God's grace. This implies that this grace, since it is God's, is perfect grace. There is no shred of selfishness, no shred of deceitfulness in this grace.
- Grace is often defined as unmerited favor or unmerited kindness. While this is not the limits of grace, it is exactly the meaning of grace in this context.
- God's Grace is active. God's grace does something and in this passage we see it does many things.

A. God's Grace Appeared

Paul refers in this point to none other than the historical life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The ministry of Jesus, in this passage at least, comes under the heading of God's grace. The ministry of Jesus is also referred to as God's Grace in the book of Hebrews – one of the most sobering of the NT.

Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, *namely*, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

B. God's Grace Brings Salvation

The text also points out that this grace does something. It brings salvation. This is a constant theme throughout the NT. Paul records on two other occasions.

Colossians 1:3-6 ³ ¶ We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel ⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as *it has been doing* in you also since the day you heard *of it* and understood the grace of God in truth;

Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

This reminder removes forever the possibility that

- God saved us because we are so good
- We were in need of just a little help

C. *God's Grace comes "to all men"*

This section does not teach universalism. As is sometimes the case, the word "all" has connotations that need to be considered.

- "All" can refer to all without exception.
- Or it can refer to all without distinction (that is all kinds ... slaves, free, men, women, children, etc)
- and it can even be further limited as in 1 Tim 4:10 all is actually explained as the believers.

In this passage, it is best to see all men with the understanding that no one comes to saving faith apart from God's Grace. In other words, every single follower of Christ is a follower because God's Grace appeared to them.

If you are here this morning and you would say that you have come to know Christ then you are the recipient of amazing grace.

- God took you from being an enemy and he made them a friend
- You were once forsaken and now you have been forgiven
- You were once orphaned and now you are adopted
- You were bound to power and penalty of sin and now you have been set free.
- You were once were abandoned and forsaken and now you enjoy the full time presence of God.
- You were once seen through the ugliness of your sin and now you are seen through the righteousness of Christ.

We need to stop and connect this point to the question we posed earlier Why don't I, why don't you live consistent with your condition (free, adopted, forgiven,...)?

The answer in part is because you have not valued God's Grace and I have not valued God's Grace that brought salvation nearly enough. We just haven't! We haven't thought enough, studied enough, rejoiced in God's grace enough.

- That is why Pastor Viars recommended this book, *The Gospel Primer*, to you a while back.
- The book encourages all of us to "preach the gospel to ourselves" because there is great value in the person who has come to Christ to reflect, to think, and to value all that God did for them to make salvation possible.

To see another aspect of this significance, Paul described the importance of this in ...

Galatians 2:19-21 "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. ²¹ "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

Sometimes we just minimize the importance of God's saving Grace in our lives by not thinking about it, by not giving God glory for it, by not talking about God's grace in our lives.

- So we talk about our favorite baseball team ... we talk about how awesome our yard looks ... we talk about the upcoming [who knows what]. All that is fine and good.
- Unless we don't talk about the grace of God that actually brought our salvation, that gave us a new identity, and showered us with a new view of life.
- When we don't do that we are in danger of doing what the Galatians did – nullifying the grace of God.

But consider the person who does the following...

- Wakes up each morning thanking God for the salvation that he brought.
- While praying for each meal the person thanks God for his Grace that brought salvation.
- Several times each day takes a 5 second break to remind himself or herself that without Jesus he/she would be ashamed rather than forgiven, bound rather than free, and alone rather than adopted.

Wouldn't that put the person in the best possible position to respond to the day in a way consistent with their condition? Wouldn't that put the person in the best possible position to view everything in their life from the perspective of their salvation in Christ?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why? Because that person understands how much grace that they have been given |
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I am convinced that if you and I can take a total of 5-10 minutes each day to think about, meditate on, and thank God for his wonderful grace then I can, you can, take a step of growth and live more and more consistent with our condition.

- Will you commit to that? Will you commit to spending 5-10 minutes each day thinking about God's wonderful, perfect, matchless grace?
- The text does not end there, for God's grace does something else...

II. God's Grace Instructs Us How to Live (Grace Gives)

God's grace in this passage is very active!

- It is the means by which we are saved and it is the means by which we understand how we should live.
- In fact, the main statement in v. 12 is "God's Grace instructs us that we should live" ... everything else in the passage describes the details of that living.
- So God's grace gets a lot done! It is indeed significant!

This living that God's grace helps us do is couched in several phrases in this text. Let's consider them in turn:

A. *God's Grace Instructs us to Deny ungodliness*

Not surprisingly the word is associated with conduct that does not please and honor the Lord. Let's consider some of the ways that ungodliness can play out in our lives.

- Marriage relationship

When in our frustration or in our anger we say things that are designed to put each other down, to hurt the other person, to attack them, or to explain just how miserable it is to live with that person. Consider how ungodly it is when one of God's children says to another one of God's children ...

- "I wish I had never married you"
- "I would be more attracted to you if you lost 15 lbs"
- "I can't take this anymore, I want a divorce"
- "I do all this for you [normally with a series of things they do] and you cannot do one simple thing for me."

Statements like these come out of people's mouths who don't understand grace.

- With the children

I get the challenges. We at least choose our spouse. Our children on the other hand are designed by God to have their own strengths and weaknesses. Yet sometimes as a parent it is possible to say, and especially think, things like this:

- "You are so stupid"
- "Why can't you do anything right?"
- "I provide all this for you and you are such an idiot that you don't get it."
- "I cannot wait until you turn 18 so you can finally leave"

Sometimes this ungodliness flows out to other family members or to their church family.

- Some people won't serve with other people.

Here is the point: They are a lousy learner of what God's Grace is teaching them. Because they struggle learning from God's Grace they are incredibly lousy at giving grace to others in their lives. They have not been taught by God's grace to deny ungodliness.

According to Heb 12:15 being a lousy learner of grace can create all sorts of challenges:

- Hebrews 12:15 - See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

On the other hand, when Grace has its day, the person begins to see their part of the problem. They begin as Matt 7:3-5 explains to take the log out of their own eye.

Matthew 7:3-5 ³ "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? ⁵ "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

B. God's Grace Instructs us to deny Worldly lusts

Desires are not the problem. But worldly desires are a serious problem.

- Just for illustration's sake I have included a chart of desires typically for communication (not exhaustive).
- These are some of the underlying desires that encourage people to respond with such ungodliness.

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|--|--|
| I want to be right | I want your undivided attention |
| I want you to agree / [I don't want to be wrong] | I want you to appreciate me |
| I want the proper amount of interaction | I want you to listen to me and acknowledge |

| | |
|--|--|
| [sometimes wordy sometimes brief] | what I say [to be understood] |
| I want you to do what I say | I want to irritate you |
| I want to solve the problem | I want to frustrate you |
| I want to be in control | I want to demonstrate intellectual superiority |
| I want peace in the situation | I want to be left alone |
| I want you to be emotionally involved in what I am telling you | I don't want to compromise |
| I want you to like me [fear of rejection] | I want to argue [I like arguing] |

- Give an illustration or two from my life...

Can you see yourself in any of these desires? Will you be willing to let Grace do the teaching in order to help you deny these things?

Grace is supposed to be the instructor to help us see all the ways in which we seek to build their own kingdoms. Grace is supposed to help us see all the ways in which we need to change.

The problem is that we are lousy students of all that grace provides.

It is as Paul wrote to the Corinthians - **2 Corinthians 6:1** And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain--

C. God's Grace Instructs us that we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly

Grace also teaches that those who get grace should be quick to give it that is let it motivate and control all that they do.

We could unpack each of these three descriptions but let me summarize them as follows:

- Soberly: reference to thoughtful self-control (Yourself)
- Righteously: uprightness in dealings with others (Others)
- Godly: Genuine piety toward God (God)

In other words, the characteristics of a person who is properly instructed results in proper thinking about who he/she is, with how they are supposed to respond to each other, and to a genuine desire to please, love, and honor the Lord.

Consider a biblical character who clearly understood this... the man was David.

- His anointing as King prior to Goliath (1 Samuel 16 David was not even invited to the party!!!! Yet the Lord had selected him for a very special service ... is that grace?)
- His run from Saul who wanted to kill him (For years he is running from Saul ... Look at Psalm 63:3 to see David's heart for God).
- His promise to Saul after God presented another opportunity to kill him. 1 Sam 24:21-22 (notice first 24:6 ... the Lord's anointed!!!! How can David possibly call him the Lord's anointed?). It was customary to eliminate all competition. Any member of the previous family poses a severe threat to the Kingdom.

- His commitment of that promise. 2 Samuel 9 [read the whole chapter] (how can David bring a member of Saul's family into the palace and give him a place at the king's table. What about a coup?)

In other words, David not only understood grace in his own life, but also the importance of giving and showing grace to others.

- God had made David king, God gave David success in battle and while he had to wait many years before he would finally rule over all Israel he did not let that go to his head.
- Despite the fact that Saul wanted to kill him and made life absolutely miserable for David at times, David still responds with grace. He responds with grace because God had been gracious to him.

In this story, David's grace extends to giving a member of Saul's family (his grandson) a place at the King's table. In those days the last thing you wanted to do was let family members of the former king live let alone let them live with you (what a place to start a new coup ... after all Methibosheth has a son)!

- David understood the grace that he received and he also understood the importance of giving that kind of grace to others.

Let's be frank, I don't always get that and some of you here today would happily join me in confessing the same. In our pride we think we are better than we are, when in reality we need to say as Paul did, that "I am what I am by the grace of God."

Just for fun lets pick a couple of examples of how grace could come up.

Let's pretend (not that there are any husbands like that in our church) that a man comes home for a day at work and discovers when he arrives that his wife has blown dinner.

- No grace approach.
 - o Irritation, frustration. You can't even get dinner on the table? I go to work everyday and seek to provide for this family and you cannot even get a decent meal to the table? What is wrong with you?
 - o Forget the 100 things that she does right, let's hammer the fire out of her for the one they did wrong.
 - o How does God look at that? How is the rest of the evening going to go?
- Imagine, if he took a totally different approach – an approach based on grace.
 - o He said ... "You know thank you for all you do around here. I know you work tirelessly to make everything so wonderful and if we have to have one 'less than ideal' meal that is no problem at all." I am thankful that you made it and that we can enjoy it together.
 - o How does God look at that? How is the rest of their evening going to go?

We could easily turn the tables and bring up examples about their husbands. What if a woman responded to her husband with similar words acknowledging all he does to work, to provide, to protect, and to care for them. Tolerating something small is really not a big deal.

- If the truth were known Stephanie is more handy than I am. I haven't exactly dropped a tree on our house, but lets put it this way. After I change a lightbulb I am thinking move over tool time Tim It is time for Tool Time Rob!
- I didn't choose to be mechanically incompetent. I was born that way. In 7th grade we had to build a little model house. They gave us most of the parts, we had to cut some and sand some of them. My friend built his and it was perfect. I built mine and it looked like the house had been hit by an earthquake.
- Here is the point ... if someone took a non-grace based approach they could ridicule the fire out of me.
 - o They could demonstrate how ignorant I am and they really would not have to try very hard.
 - o But a grace based approach values all things I do right and well and the skills I do have and seeks solutions to weaknesses.

Is that the way people view you? Are you the grace based person who just gives grace about struggles and weaknesses or are you the non-grace based person who harms the relationship with unkind words and actions?

What happens when the children do not excel in the athletic contest or does not do well in school?

- One person's best is just not the same as another person's best. God has given abilities differently. Do you treat your children that way?
- Imagine how frustrating it would be if you ridicule their lack of ability when God chose not to give it to them.

Friends, grace is given, grace teaches, and those who are good students of grace understand that a grace based approach to dealing with people in your life looks entirely different from a non-grace based approach.

Vv 13-14 add much to the discussion. It is still connected to the way we should live. We need to live soberly, righteously, and godly but we also need to do something else.

D. God's Grace Instructs us to Look for the Return of Jesus

Grace also instructs us that earth is not our home. We are sojourners awaiting the consummation of our home. Since our citizenship is in heaven we are to live like citizens of heaven.

Philippians 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

- Grace helps us see the bigger picture
- Thus, there should be a hint of homesickness in our lives.

It is as if, in this passage, God wants us to have one eye on the present life now and one eye on our future. A future that is glorious and wonderful and free from all the challenges we face today.

As is so often in Paul, as soon as he brings up Christ, he must give some reminders about all that Jesus is.

In v. 14 Paul shifts subjects. No longer is the issue grace per se, it is the foundation of that Grace – Jesus Christ. With four very simple phrases reminds us of some great truths that will help us follow the example of our savior by giving grace.

- Who gave himself
- Redeem us from every lawless deed
- Purify for himself a people of his own possession
- A people zealous for good works

As good of a picture of Grace that David is, Jesus is better! So friends, let me remind you that Jesus designed you to be a people for his possession zealous for good works so that we might do this:

Colossians 1:15-18 ¹⁵ ¶ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

Jesus redeemed so you could give him first place in everything. Today, the exhortation is simple:

Since you have received so much grace give Jesus first place by giving it out as freely as possible. To say it another way... Grace received ... Grace Given.

Friends, God's grace is a teacher. God's grace help one make the connections between the grace that they have been given and the grace that is now required.

Imagine if all of the families in our church made the commitment to work this week and each week on a grace based approach to life.

- Imagine if you will marriages that are defined by grace rather than "right" or what you deserve.
- Imagine children living in a home acting like all they have is by God's grace rather than the attitude that mom and dad should let me do what I want, have the clothes I want, and drive the car I deserve.
- Imagine parents looking at their children through the grid of God's grace for them. Instead of being critical for everything they don't do well encouraging the things they do right.

Summary

[music quietly playing] I don't know all that is happening today. What you are afraid of ... What you are upset about ... or whether you are happy in Jesus or not? But I want to exhort you to do something with the truth we have talked about today.

- For those that would say you have never experienced this grace ...
- For those of you that have Grace not only appears it teaches. Maybe you have been listening to the wrong influences.

Here is what I am asking you to do today.

1. Take 5-10 minutes each day this coming week and think about God's grace in bringing salvation to you and the lessons that God's grace wants to teach you and then
2. To work really hard to give grace in the relationship you struggle with the most (maybe a husband-wife ... parent-child ... co-worker, etc).

Pray [stand together]