



Teaching

Grace

Notes for TCC Teaching on Grace 11-24-13

Grace Is Not a Thing

- Randi came a couple of years ago...grace is Hese...Essential characteristic of God's being that is expressed as God does for us what we can not do for ourselves, and which we were never intended to be able to do.
- Grace is God and God is grace, just as God is love. Grace is who God is, and we are created to be in relation to, receipt of and response to God as grace.
- Grace of God vs God as grace
- God is love – grace is free for all
- God is relational – grace is cooperant, we participate

Grace Is Not “Plan B”

- Now, a lot of people view grace as being a New Testament thing, something that started for us when Jesus paid a penalty on the cross and earned us grace (which many kind of define as “not being under the law” or “not going to hell for our sins.”)

- But, grace is and always has been an integral part of God's plan for us. Grace isn't plan B. It's not a fix for how we messed things up.
- God's not mad about grace.
- We can rejoice in our condition, God made us for grace and said we are good.
- And the more we let the guilt and condemnation go, the easier it is to live in grace

“The sooner we figure out, that your love is all about, learning to trust, like upon a mother's breast, the better of we will be, resting comfortably, at home in innocence.” – Andrew Ehrenzeller

- Not just as a means of being rescued from death but as the source and means of life
- It's how we were made to function from the beginning.

Grace From the Beginning

- We were designed to live in God's presence exercising dominion in the earth through right relationship with God as the provider of blessing, abundance and divine order.
- Designed to have dominion, yes, but that was never intended to be outside of grace.
- We were created to be dependent, not independent. Independence is not dominion, it is idolatry.
- Grace is inherent in original creation, not simply a correction of the Fall

- Even at the original moment of rejection of God, God's grace was still active as God sustained life for Adam and Eve instead of allowing them to die.
- God sustained their lives, in absence of any sacrifice, penance or performance on their part. Then, in a further expression of God's nature of grace
- He already showed that sin was not a deal-breaker for him, just by keeping them alive. He already had power over the consequence of sin, long before Jesus came and died on the cross. His grace was in full force, as it has always been. I see the cross as being more about union with us, sin is secondary to that.
- Sin does not have the power over God or the work of redemption that Christians often seem to ascribe to it.
- It is unfortunate that the church has often focused on sin as primary, instead of placing the problem of sin within the context of the larger concern of relationship which seems to be more primary in the unfolding story of redemption.
- God as holy can't be around sin? He sought them out. Later, God comes as flesh, entering into a world of sin, it is not a problem for God.
- Until we stop giving power to sin, we are never going to be able to fully embrace God and live in the grace for which we were created.
- We give power to sin by thinking we have a "sin nature" that has to be expelled, or even that sin is an entity.

- The Hebrews understood we have free will as part of our nature, and can always choose to submit to God or not. We can't get rid of that aspect of ourselves, it is part of our design.
- We have a human nature, the problem is us trying to live as human outside of relationship to God as grace.
- All Satan ever had on us was illusion, lies, deception. He has no creative power, and we don't either. He can't change our DNA, he can't make us "not good." Only God has that power, but God never changed his mind about us. God cursed the land, and the serpent, but only described to us the consequences that we enter into when we choose to try to live outside of who we are.
- We need to see ourselves as God has always seen us and begin to live out of that truth.
- God removed them from access to the tree of life. – Why? was that about their sin or was it about broken relationship.

The Redemption of Relationship

- OT
 - God woos, anguishes, rages and relents again and again in the journey of restoration which unfolds. God's grace was present
 - Noah was spared
 - Abraham blessed

- the Israelites freed from slavery
- the law given
- the promised land occupied and
- prophets anointed to trumpet the message of God's pursuit of humanity.
- Jesus
 - God finally breaks through our rejection and God unifies Himself with humanity to restore what was lost and restore relationship. Jesus descends to flesh, becoming human to transform us from the inside out.
 - In the garden, we were in the presence of God, but in the new creation that is inaugurated by Jesus, we ourselves become the gardens of God's presence.
- How???

God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved) and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory (Ephesians 2:4-7 ASV).
- Incarnation
 - God transforms flesh and lives as both human and divine, beginning the process of unifying restoration.
- Crucifixion

- Jesus defeats death by entering into it, transforming it and renewing it from the inside out.
- Joined in union with flesh, Jesus experiences death to strip it of its power over flesh.
- The issue has always been relationship. We walked away from it, into shame and hiding. And God has been pursuing us ever since, finally coming to make us one with Him. What were the last messages of Jesus before going to the cross? Make them one! One would think if paying for our sins was the big focus that might have come up in the conversation of the Last Supper.
- And that's exactly what He did. Jesus created a union with us. We are in Christ, whether we know it or not. Adam sin affected all...how much more so does Jesus death? He died for all. The cross was a marriage, and it was cosmic. He redeemed everything and changed everything. It was new creation. It was embrace.
- That's grace. Again, God giving life. Resurrection life. Making us new. Right there in the midst of the worst sin that we could throw at him, the worst death, the worst that we can be. And Jesus, God the father, and the Holy Spirit used that as the material from which they formed a whole new creation.
- Resurrection

- Jesus even transforms life by becoming the first born of a new creation, the second Adam.
- Ascension
 - Jesus, still flesh, raises flesh, still in union with Him, up with Him and seats us with God in heavenly places.
- Sending of the Holy Spirit
 - Jesus infills and empowers us by His presence in us by which we live in union with Him and the Father until our full re-birth into the new creation.

For All

- NT Wright, Skip, many other properly place this work of Christ in context of the cosmos
- Skip talked about the vastness, the scale of the largeness
- There is also the same scale of smallness in the cosmos...subatomic life and particles we are still discovering
- We are right in the midst of all of it, and included, not unseen, unknown
- This is both cosmic and intimate
- We are all included, we just don't all know it...remember free and done but we participate

Now What? Transformation (Covenant Exchange)

Divine grace does not mean that there is nothing left for us to do. Quite the contrary, it is because of divine grace that we are able to begin to seek freedom from the effects of sin and evil, and to begin to love in the way Christ loves. (9)

Beholding

- And we all, with unveiled face, beholding[b] the glory of the Lord, are being changed (2 Cor 3:18)
- Remember, grace is not a thing, to live as we were intended we live in and by grace, through relationship with the one who is grace.
- Often referred to as mystics, these writers also speak to the practical ways in which the redemption provided to us by grace is apprehended, experience and worked out in our lives. A common thread among these experiences is that of beholding God face-to-face.
- A variety of methods are described by the mystics as instrumental in formation such as: lectio divina, prayer, reverencing icons, communion, fasting, meditation or corporate worship.
- I believe the root activity that results in transformation is the same for each method – to turn and face God in the relationship that Jesus has fully restored.

Healing

- One of the most dear expressions of God's grace for me is that of healing.
- Much of my own healing came through beholding Jesus in faith imagination with counselors and spiritual guides, or in my own times of seeking His face.
- As I have learned to experience the reality of redemption as being in union with Christ, through the power of Holy Spirit, and seated in heavenly places, the power of sin is being broken in my life and healing is manifesting.
- I have learned that focusing on my sin or failures is not productive, but as I focus on Jesus and behold Him, the roots of sin in me are removed and freedom comes.
- I was created to be dependent upon God for my life, so there is no sense of guilt or failure in coming to Him for all my needs, in living out of grace for which I was created.

Healing Ministry

- Each person comes to the prayer session with their own healing already inside of them and pushing for expression
- Jesus is the light of all men in the world (John 1:2-4).

- Jesus is in all, sustaining all and seeking restoration and healing for all, even though many are not aware of the source of their very lives and desire for wholeness.
- I hope to act as a gentle guide to help them to behold Jesus in them in whatever way Jesus wants to express Himself to that person.
- The result of beholding Jesus is always transformational and always healing

Conclusion

- Grace is not Plan B
- Grace is God, God is grace, it is character, not thing
- We experience God as grace relationally, with no condemnation – WE WERE MADE FOR THIS!
- Made by grace for grace!
- Grace is God's design for us from the beginning and sin has no power to change what God has designed and created.
- We are changed through beholding God as grace...eyes on Jesus.