

Embracing Grace – Part 15: “Grace and the Exchanged Life”

1. This sermon series is almost at a close...I believe that in the past two weeks and in this week’s sermon, I am making the concluding points that we need to know about Embracing Grace. We have learned so much about grace.
 - a. Getting the opposite of what we deserve.
 - b. We can give grace by giving others the opposite of what they deserve. There is the root of the mysterious commands by Jesus where He tells us to bless those who curse you and to love those who hate you. We are to be conduits of God’s grace.
 - c. We have come to grips with the wonderful truth that there is nothing you as a Christian can do to make God love you more than He does right now, and there is nothing you can do to make Him love you less.
 - d. We grappled with the stunning truth that there is no single sin that will condemn a person to hell. Drinking, smoking, gambling...they are terrible vices that will ruin your life and the lives of others...but they won’t send you to hell any more than not doing them will send you to heaven. The only way to heaven is through the grace of God found in trusting Jesus Christ to be your substitute, and the way to hell is to reject the forgiveness Jesus Christ offers.
 - e. We learned that while grace is free it isn’t cheap; it cost God the life of His beloved Son.
 - f. We learned that grace is something so valuable that it ought to make everything else in life seem unimportant and worthless by comparison.
 - g. Over the past several weeks, we have looked at how impossible it is to live the Christian life. This shows us our dependence upon Grace. And the moment we realize this, grace points us to something else.
 - i. **Grace teaches us that we are not to try to live “for God” but rather to let God live through us.**
 - ii. On the surface, this sounds so good, but most of us are hard wired to a performance-based lifestyle that we cannot fathom how to live in a manner different that we have learned or experienced.
 1. Most pastors (including myself) have tried to teach our congregations on how to “live the Christian life.”
 2. We tell our folks to live morally, live right, live lovingly, try hard, be kind, don’t sin, don’t live for yourself, live for God. All of these are useful, but they miss the point if we don’t understand “HOW” to live in this way. If I simply say “Live by the power of the Holy Spirit but never demonstrate how to do so, I do you a disservice. .
2. Let me tell you something I have never told anyone before: As a growing Christian, I made a very unsettling discovery. I had always thought that eternal life was the equivalent of an “extension” or a continuation of my present life. My physical life began in 1954, and so I believed that when I accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, that God placed a permanent addition, He added an endless continuum onto the end of my life that would last through eternity. Perhaps that is how you have looked at eternal life as well.
 - a. But this is not what eternal life means.
 - i. Eternal life is not where God allows the self-led, self oriented life that I was comprised of, that had effectively separated me from Him, to be extended forever.
 - ii. If that were true, then I would be “saved” with a “fire insurance policy” on my life, have a guaranteed get out of hell free card at my disposal...and just continue to live a life that was lived in the shadow of God’s favor by believing the right stuff, worshipping on Sunday and serving in some manner that used my gifting for God.
 - b. But what I have discovered is that God’s plan was the opposite.
 - c. I discovered that God desires to exchange my old life with the new life of His Son.

- d. (John 12: 24-25 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.whoever loses his life will find it."*).
- i. God's plan was to exterminate, destroy, put to death my old life and exchange it for a brand new Life (capital L).
 - ii. That new LIFE is Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself called himself the "the way the truth and the life."
 - iii. Eternal life is not an "it."
 - iv. Eternal life is not a possession we own or that we can lose.
 - v. Eternal life is not a commodity.
 - vi. **Eternal life is Jesus.**
 1. Think about your powered appliances at home. Your dishwasher, your stove, your blender, food processor, refrigerator. They all serve different functions. But all of them are plugged into the same power source...the electrical outlet. For all intents and purposes, the electricity is their life. Now the electricity doesn't make them identical, it actually enables them to come to the fullness of their identity and purpose. So as long as the electricity flows, these appliances and tools manifest their true identity. The life gives them the ability to do so. Without the life of the electricity, they are nothing more than paperweights.
 2. So it is with you and I. The life of Christ in us, like abiding in the vine, He animates our life and directs us so that we have the ability to let His life function through our uniqueness.
 - vii. Last week I spoke about how God gave us a brand new heart. We literally got a heart transplant when we placed our faith in Christ. We got the very desires of Jesus Christ. But when you think about life...we got the very life of Jesus Christ in us as well. We not only got the passion of Jesus, we got the heart beat of God Himself giving us supernatural life.
 - viii. Is this making sense to you? Are the lights coming on for you? <Lord, I pray that the veil of spiritual deception be lifted and that the eyes of our hearts might be opened to see these truths with the core of our being and to believe them so that You might live within us in Power and glory. In Jesus Name, Amen.>

I want to examine the "doings" we do in and for Christ:

3. Ephesians 2:8-10 *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."*
 - a. This passage is underlining a powerful truth: **We don't do works FOR God, but "In Christ."**
 - b. Let me ask you a question, "Can you do a righteous act?"
 - i. **A Righteous act is defined as doing something that is pleasing to God.**
 - ii. The truth is, no you cannot. Apart from Jesus Christ, everything we do is trash, worthless and empty in its potential and value to God. It may have value to men, or to us, but to God, its value is found only to the measure that it is done in Jesus Christ.
 - c. Isaiah 64:6 *"All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;"*
 - i. A non-Christian cannot perform a righteous act because he lacks Jesus living in him. He can do good things, he can even perform heroically selfless actions, he can do moral acts as well. But he cannot do "righteous acts."
 - ii. Does that mean that good people who do extraordinarily good things aren't doing righteous acts? Yes, I do mean that.
 - iii. They are doing good things. That is of course much better than doing bad things.
 - iv. You can do good stuff. You can even do religious stuff.

1. You can walk a little old lady across the street, you can feed the hungry, you can clothe the naked, you can even die for your faith.
 2. But these can be empty, religious or moral actions. They can be without eternal value or lasting meaning. And they can even be acts void of any righteousness. Why? Go back to our definition: **A righteous action is defined as doing something pleasing to God.** There is only One Person who has ever been perfectly pleasing to God...that is His Son, Jesus Christ.
- v. .But can a Christian fail to perform righteous acts?
1. Of course. He can do things according to his own fleshly motivations, his own fleshly gratification, and get no reward because its source is found in himself instead of in Jesus Christ.
 2. But the only actions that are righteous acts, the only deeds that are pleasing to God are the actions that are done "In Christ."
 3. The bible tells us that all of our deeds that are done in the flesh, outside of the impetus and power and LIFE of Jesus Christ will be burnt up at the Judgment. It will be a frightening sight to see your time spent waxing your car, chatting on the internet, or whatever you have preferred over the Life of Christ be consumed by fire.
4. What does it look like to do LIFE in Christ?
- a. Lets back track a bit. Jesus gives us the pattern, and He does this on more than one occasion:
 - i. Jesus said in John 4:19-20, "*Jesus answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. 20 "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing;"*"
 - ii. John 8:28-30 *So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 "And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him." 30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him."*
 1. This is the pattern for our study of EXPERIENCING GOD that we will be conducting this fall on Sunday nights. There is no way you can get all you need in a 35 minute sermon on Sunday mornings. That is why we have bible studies and in depth teachings on Sunday mornings and evenings...to help you get your life conformed to the truth of God's word!
 - iii. So are Jesus' actions pleasing to God simply because He is the Son of God, or because also that He is the Son of God who is doing ONLY what He sees the Father doing and does nothing on His own initiative?
 - iv. I believe that it is the latter. Christ's perfect obedience to the Father is based upon His willingness and perfect compliance with the Father's will in all things. He did nothing on His own initiative, He did only what He "saw the Father doing."
 1. What is the implication for you and I?
 2. It is found in Colossians 1:26- "*the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, 27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. 29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*"
 - a. Christians gloss over this passage day in and day out and never come to grips with the incredible reality and possibilities this possesses for each of us.

- b. A mystery, hidden since the foundations of the world has been made clear to God's saints (believers). It is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory."
- c. Even in v. 28-29, Paul emphasizes this stating that he works for the purpose of proclamation and admonishment to present every man complete in Christ "according to His power which works mightily within me."
- d. In other words, Paul is committed completely to letting the power and LIFE of Christ WITHIN work through him. Paul is committed to doing only what he sees Jesus doing. He desires to present every Christian he was responsible for complete in Christ...yet we are content to be incomplete, living separate lives from Christ and His supernatural life. Do you wonder why the 21st century church is so powerless in comparison to the 1st century church?
- v. John 20:21-22 *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*
 - 1. What does He mean, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you?"
 - 2. It means that just as He did what the Father willed, so also shall we. We shall find every action with the potential to be done "In Christ."
 - 3. In Christ means we do only what we see the Father doing.
 - 4. William Temple, Archbishop in the 1940s, used to illustrate this point from Shakespeare: 'It is no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it – I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it – I can't. But if the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me, then I could write plays like this. And if the Spirit could come into me, then I could live a life like His.'
- b. Christ in Me, Me in Christ: Jesus comes into the believer, and the believer is placed into Christ. For every verse you find in the NT stating the believer is indwelt by Jesus Christ, there are 10 verses stating the believer is in Christ Jesus. 10 to 1 ratio. Why don't we ever hear of it? I only hear of Jesus in Me...but never about me in Jesus.
 - i. Jesus does come into our lives to save us, to empower us and make us brand new creations. That is the salvation message. But a diet of salvation messages won't bring us to maturity.
 - ii. Being in Christ has many implications, some of which we have covered before:
 - 1. I was in Christ when Jesus was crucified. My sins were on Him. My self-willed self was crucified with Christ. God executed me with Jesus. He buried me and everything that was sinful with Jesus.
 - 2. When Christ died, I died. I was in Christ when He died. (I have been crucified with Christ. – Gal 2:20).
 - 3. If this dollar bill is "in this book" then if I burn this book, this dollar bill will burn too! Because whatever happens to the object it is in happens to it as well.
 - 4. So what part of me died with Christ? My old spiritual identity died.
 - 5. In fact, at Calvary, I was given a new present and a new future, as well as a new past! (Gillham, Lifetime Guarantee).
 - a. My spiritual roots are no longer in Adam. They were ripped up and replaced and placed in Christ, the moment I believed.
 - iii. Why do we celebrate bread and wine elements? Why not just wine – blood? The body reminds me that I was executed with Jesus, the old rebel, Bob, was put to death, my old identity was killed at Calvary with Jesus.

5. Col. 3:3 *“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who IS our life...”*
 - a. How did you become a Christian? By being placed in Christ when you believed on Jesus’ sacrifice on your behalf. Your old man died with Him.
 - b. God’s plan is for you and I to let the life of Jesus within us to come through us. God doesn’t want you to try your best to live the Christian life. Stop beating yourself up! Stop feeling so bad because you aren’t living so good!
 - c. **We are to live the EXCHANGED LIFE, not the best we can kind of life.**
 - i. Does this mean we do as we please? No! Because if Jesus is our Life, then He is also the motivating factor, the empowering factor, the reason for our Life as well.
6. When we choose to walk in the Spirit, which is our true and present identity, we serve the law of love. But when we are deceived into walking (living) after the flesh, we serve the law of sin and self.
 - a. Our victory lies not in battling or fighting against the power of Satan.
 - b. **Our victory consists of starting a new method of walking experiencing Christ as our very life** while we act dead toward those thoughts that come from our fleshly motivations, irregardless of our emotions or experiences. Indwelling sin will serve up the lies to your mind and your emotions that you are less than complete.
7. Results of Exchanged Life Living:
 - a. John 14: 10 *“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. 11 “Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. 12 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. 13 “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 “If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”*
 - b. This is the power of “experiencing God” – of embracing His Grace, of recognizing our utter helplessness to do anything in our own strength (and refusing to act on own desires) instead, doing what we do in Christ...we will see God do greater things than “these.”
 - c. Many Christians are bothered by this passage. I believe it is because they think it is them who will be doing the works and the miracles. And they are bothered by the possibility that they will do greater works than Jesus? No way!
 - i. The truth is easier to understand. Christ in me. Jesus is doing the miracles and signs. It is He who does them, not me. When you come for prayer today...if I pray for you, it is no longer me praying for you, but Jesus. The same Jesus that prays for you can pray for you through Joe, or Bill, or Jennifer, or anyone else here that is willing to let God use them.
 - ii. When I lay hands on someone to pray for them, it isn’t my hands alone that are upon that person. It is the same as Jesus Christ laying His hands upon that person, and Jesus Christ Himself is praying for that person.
 - iii. When you encourage someone, it isn’t your words alone, they are the very words of Jesus coming out of your mouth, from the very heart of God.
 - iv. That is the meaning of “in Jesus Name” – it isn’t a magical tag line we add to get our prayers answered. It is the statement of faith that we aren’t offering this prayer on our own initiative or strength, but in the authority, power and Life of Jesus Christ within us.

John 12: 49 *"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. 50 "I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."*

John 10:10 "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

John 6:28 "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."