

The God of Grace

This "Unchanging" series could go on for a thousand years with a thousand messages and never get old or boring. God is infinite. And Daniel 11:32 says studying the person of God is no theoretical pursuit: "The people who know their God shall stand firm and take action."

Today we will look at The God of Grace

1 Peter 5:10-11. "And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen."

We're perhaps used to talking about the grace of God, but not the God of Grace. But grace flows from a God who is grace.

What is grace? It means "free undeserved favour" that God gives.

At the very centre of God's being, his disposition towards us is grace. Charles Spurgeon commenting on Hebrews 4 "The Throne of Grace":

*"It is a throne set up on purpose for the dispensation of grace; a throne from which every utterance is an utterance of grace; the sceptre that is stretched out from it is the silver sceptre of grace; the decrees proclaimed from it are purposes of grace; the gifts that are scattered down its golden steps are gifts of grace; and **he that sits upon the throne is grace itself.**"*

1. Common Grace

God's grace is demonstrated in all we see and know. Theologians call this "common grace"- meaning everyone gets to experience it

Matthew 5:45 "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

We see God's common grace in:

- Creation. The sun rises, the rain comes.
- Knowledge. God gave humans the ability to think and learn which has led to remarkable discoveries
- Art, music & literature. God gave humans the ability to create and bless others.
- Society. The basic building block is family and community, which are from God (He is Trinity, He created family)

2. Special Grace

He also gives us "special grace". The apostle John said Jesus came into the world "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). No one summarised the prophets that way! They had moments like Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 47 but it was judgment and truth.

But when the Son of God comes as the full and final revelation of God, he sets a different, more complete tone. He enlarges further in John 3:17: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

3. Our salvation is based on this Grace

Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith and this not from yourselves it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast"

"Boasting" comes with self-effort that produces results. Our greatest moments...When we land a dream job, or win an Olympic gold medal, or make a tasty meal. We can always say "this is what I did..."

But when it comes to knowing God, when you ask a Christian their greatest moment they point to the cross of calvary where the Son of God loved them and gave himself for them. Not by anything they'd done – no works to boast about.

Peter experienced Grace when he first met Jesus in Luke 5. He'd worked all night trying to catch fish, but his work didn't pay off. Jesus then changes the situation by bringing in a catch of more fish than Peter could count, simply as a result of Peter trusting Jesus.

The message of grace is that by trusting Jesus we achieve the status of "Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3) - the highest privilege a human could have. It's worth more than all the riches in the world.

At the cross we received a divine exchange, 2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Jesus took all of our sin. There was never an uglier moment in human history, than when the Son of God took all the sin of the world onto himself. What did we contribute to relationship with God? Sin!

But ALSO, he gave the righteousness of God to us. All that's good – his love, mercy, holiness, kindness, gentleness, purity, humility- all given to you as a gift. He clothes us with the righteousness of God and he gives us a new heart and fills us with the Spirit.

Because he's the God of All Grace, his grace has ultimate say over ALL seasons of life. your past present and future. See the sweep he has over you:

Romans 8:29-30 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

4. Gift of Grace

Knowing this God of Grace begins with receiving his gift of grace.

This God of all Grace also wants to work powerfully through our everyday lives

- Receive strength in grace, 2 Corinthians 12:9. “But he said to me, ‘My **grace** is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.”
- Practice Gifts of grace, 1 Peter 4:10 “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s **grace** in its various forms.”
- Pursue the Plan of Grace, Ephesians 2:10 “created to do good works which he has planned for you.”
- Initiate Conversations of grace, Colossian 4:6 “Let your conversation be always full of **grace**, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

It’s all so free, so undeserved. Ephesians 2:8 tell us this gift is received through **faith**.

So, let me ask you - are you still believing in Grace alone? Are you still trusting? Still enjoying?

Questions

1. **Common Grace.** How does an understanding of God’s gifts in arts, science, creation, society etc grow our appreciation of these things? What graces are you especially grateful for / blessed by?
2. **God’s grace in Jesus.** How does understanding grace as a gift shape the way we live the Christian life? What difference might it make to:
 - The way we pray
 - Feelings of guilt/ not belonging
 - Our confidence in God using us
 - The way we deal with people