

The Basics of Christianity

Mercy and Grace

Titus 2:11-14

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INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with "The Basics of Christianity" series. The purpose for this series is so we can be more effective in our witness to those who have not accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This morning we will look at mercy and grace.

Grace is given to us by the leniency of God. It allows us to receive blessings that we **do not** deserve. We have many blessings from God, but the greatest blessing was sending His Son to die on the cross for our salvation. Jesus paid the price for our sins and instilled within us His righteousness. That is pure Grace!

Mercy is **also** given to us by the leniency of God. It prevents us from receiving the punishment that we **do** deserve. We receive mercy from God because of His grace.

But know for certain that God's grace has its limits. We cannot continue to live as we did before our salvation. As Paul put it, we cannot continue to sin in order that grace may abound. We must live like we are redeemed.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Titus 2:11-14 (NASB95)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Prayer

The gospel is the "good news" of Jesus Christ. It is "good news" for a hopelessly lost world.

Satan deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 3:1-7 (NASB95)

³ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw

that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

When man ate of the Tree of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. We did surely die! It was not a physical death as the serpent wanted Adam and Eve to believe. It was a spiritual death that separated us from God. Satan had successfully separated us from God and there was nothing WE could do about it on our own.

But we have GOOD NEWS!

It is the gospel of Jesus Christ and it comes to us by the **grace** of GOD!

Titus 2:11-14 (NASB95)

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

Because of God's **grace** He offered us an opportunity to be reconciled back to Him and be made righteous even though we do not deserve it.

¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

The gospel is the **word of truth**. He left us with His Word which is **true** and instructs us how to live once we have accepted His salvation. We learned from Paul that if we love God we will desire to serve Him. We will have an active faith and an active love for God and one another.

The gospel is a **message of hope**. We can have the desire to sacrifice our time and efforts for God because of the **hope** that we have in our salvation. We have the assurance that we have been brought back in favor with God and that we will spend an eternal life in Heaven when we die or Christ comes again.

¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

This all is possible because God loves us so much that He was willing to send His Son to earth to die on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for our sins. The death of Christ on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection on the third day shows His ability to overcome the spiritual death that we inherited through the **power** of the gospel.

The last part of verse 14 says that due to our salvation we will be **zealous for good deeds**.

Due to our understanding that the Bible is **Truth** and that salvation comes through the **Grace** and **Power** of God through His Son, Jesus Christ; we can have the assured **Hope** that we have been totally forgiven of our sins and that will cause us to earnestly **desire** to live for God.

We do not have the mind of God. As man, we cannot understand HOW eating of the Tree of Good and Evil caused us to die spiritually and separate us from God. We cannot understand HOW Christ's dying on the cross was able to strip us of our sins and restore us back to God by just accepting His plan of salvation.

Although we cannot fully comprehend these things, we can trust that it is true because it is in God's Word. And from God's Word we **DO** know that we are only saved through the Gospel! The "Good News of Jesus Christ".

John 14:6 (NASB95)

“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

This morning I would like to share with you **three ways** in which the gospel is grace.

BODY:

I. The Gospel is Grace Because it is Entirely Undeserved.

Colossians 1:5-6 (NASB95)

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;**

Paul said that ever since the day when you heard the gospel and understood it; what you **understood** was that it was **true** and that it **required the grace of God**. The gospel is a message of God’s grace! We constantly receive blessings from God that we do not deserve.

Romans 1:18-21 (NASB95)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Paul says all mankind knows two things from creation itself.

- There is a God.

Since creation itself declares that there is a divine God.

- That God is awesome.

God tells us that when man honestly looks at creation, he knows there must be a Creator and that that Creator must be awesome.

Therefore, Paul says, that we are all without excuse. Therefore, God’s holy and just wrath is against everyone that has not surrendered to Him. That is every man, woman, and child in their natural born condition. They are rejecters of God who have earned His wrath.

LISTEN! What we deserve is God's wrath. What we deserve is eternal death.

ILLUSTRATION:

When God sent the great flood to destroy the earth the first time, only eight people were saved (Noah and his family). The entire population received what they deserved by drowning to death.

You might ask, “How could God do that”?

But I would suggest that you are asking the wrong question. The correct question is “Why was Noah and his family **allowed to live**”? **They deserved to die!**

We all do! In our natural born state we are all separated from God due to our spiritual death. We are all guilty of sin. It is only our **blindness** that makes us think that we deserve better than that!

It is because we have been deceived by our man-centered focus. We tend to believe the lies that are generated from the world instead of trusting God’s Word.

But the gospel is grace because it comes to us and tells us that death is what we deserve, **but God loves us and is offering us salvation!**

The gospel offers us not WHAT we deserve, but a FREE GIFT of rescue. **That is GRACE!**

Our sins have been completely forgiven by the blood of Christ and we have been declared RIGHTEOUS! The gospel is grace because it is entirely undeserved.

If God condemned me to Hell, I could not claim that He was unfair.

The gospel is grace, first of all because it is underserved. Secondly...

II. The Gospel is Grace Because it is Absolutely Free.

Ephesians 2:8-10 (NASB95)

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. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The gospel message is not a message about what YOU can do to be saved.

It is not a message about how YOU can earn salvation.

It is an announcement about a savior that has saved. It is an announcement about what Christ has done to save you!

We can only accept that salvation by faith. Let us be clear, even the faith itself is a gift from God that is brought by the gospel.

Verse 8 again says, ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is the gift of God*.

The thing *that is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*, includes the faith itself.

Romans 10:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Faith is what God instills within us from the hearing of the Gospel. Faith requires a belief in the truths of Jesus and our submission to Him.

There is a third reason that the Gospel is grace.

III. The Gospel is Grace Because it is Abundantly Sufficient.

Romans 5:20-21 (NASB95)

but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹ so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul says, no matter how great the sin is, Christ's sacrifice is more than sufficient. It is able once and forever to pay the penalty for all our sins. When Christ died upon the cross He made a sacrifice of infinite value. He paid a price of infinite worth. No amount of sin can ever overcome that sacrifice. It can never be a greater debt than He was willing to pay.

Paul believed that his salvation was proof of this very point. He called himself the chief of sinners.

1 Timothy 1:13-14 (NASB95)

¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus.

Paul was a blasphemer in that he had rejected Jesus Christ. He denied that Jesus was who He claimed to be. Paul despised Christ so much that he was a violent opponent.

He was a persecutor who aggressively tried to stamp out any one who dared to believe in Jesus. He went from house to house arresting people who believed in Christ.

Acts 26:10-11 (NASB95)

¹⁰ And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

Paul said I punished them, trying to make them blaspheme. You know what we call that today? We call it torture. He tortured them and then he would cast his vote for their death. Despite all of that, Paul said that the mercy of God overflowed to me. God saved Paul. Paul's point is that if God can save me, the chief of sinners, he can save anyone.

The gospel is grace because it is abundantly sufficient.

CONCLUSION:

Many pastors in churches put out a very good message concerning the saving grace of the gospel. They emphasize the scriptures that talk about a saving grace through faith, but ignore scriptures on baptism by immersion into water. They will say that there is "no water in baptism. Baptism is a spiritual baptism. After all, isn't baptism a work? We are not saved by works."

The scriptures refer to baptism over 100 times in the New Testament. If baptism is not important why do you suppose it is there? There is no doubt that baptism was immersion into water.

Acts 8:35-38 (NASB95)

³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him. ³⁶ As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch *said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁷ [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."] ³⁸ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

Do you see any way to construe this scripture to mean spiritual baptism? They stopped the chariot by some water. Both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went into the water and Philip baptized him. The baptism was done by Philip, not the Holy Spirit.

If baptism was not necessary, why did Jesus himself tell us in Matthew and Mark just before He ascended to heaven to baptize?

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB95)

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Christ commissioned the apostles to go and make disciples, baptizing them into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was the disciples that were to be doing the baptism, not the Holy Spirit. Since the apostles could not do a spiritual baptism, one is forced to conclude that the baptism of Matthew 28:19 is *water* baptism, not Spirit baptism.

Also consider

Ephesians 4:4-5 (NASB95)

⁴ *There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*
⁵ *one Lord, one faith,* (AND TWO BAPTISMS...no, wait a moment, it says) *one baptism,*

Can this scripture be construed in any way to suggest that there is a water baptism and a spiritual baptism?

A tract was hung on a door knob in a plastic bag entitled *The Grace That Saves*. Inside, it commented on *God's Simple Plan of Salvation*. It explained how to be saved as follows:

Just pray: Oh God, I know I am a sinner. I believe Jesus was my substitute when he died on the cross. I believe His shed blood, death, burial and resurrection were for me. I now receive Him as my Savior. I thank you for the forgiveness of my sins, and the gift of salvation and everlasting life, because of your merciful grace. Amen.

Acts 2:37-38 (NASB95)

³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸ Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

If salvation is accomplished by only repenting of our sins and praying a "sinners prayer", why wouldn't Peter, in Acts 2:38, just teach them to pray the "sinners prayer". What is the value of even mentioning baptism if it is of no value?

The Gospel is the inerrant word of God. We cannot arbitrarily choose the scriptures that support our belief and ignore the scriptures that conflict with them. If ALL scripture is of God, and it is, then ALL scripture is true. It is our job to ask God for wisdom and understanding to fit it all together.

Jesus told us, "*If you love me, you will keep My commandments*". And what was one of the very last commandments that He gave to the disciples just before He ascended to heaven? "*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.*"

Consider this: if baptism is not necessary, as many today proclaim, what happens to those of us who lived by faith and **were** baptized by immersion into water? Would that baptism nullify their salvation? Would God's grace be nullified? **NO!**

Then what if we **ARE** to repent **and be baptized** for the remission of our sins and you choose not to obey? Your decision to disregard God's command **would** nullify your salvation?

I would rather error on the side of caution.

The Family of God