

# Grace

REVIEW: In our series on grace so far, we have looked at the words that the Bible uses for grace in the OT and NT. We have considered grace from a theological perspective - coming to understand common grace and special grace. We have seen a NT example of grace being extended by Jesus Christ to the woman caught in adultery. Last week we looked at the passage in the OT that inspired the infamous hymn, Amazing Grace.

TRAN: Today I want to turn a corner in a way and look at us. For the most part we have been looking at God, and His grace to us. Let's face it, we would never understand grace without a serious look at God. In reality, we will still be looking at God today, because you can't talk about true grace without God.

What I want us to consider today is well illustrated in a story from the OT. After bringing this story to mind, we will leap forward and put the story in context with God's grace displayed in Jesus Christ.

## I. The story of the Exodus from Egypt

A.If you recall your OT stories, the nation of Israel became slaves in the land of Egypt when, Joseph and his family all settled there

1. Joseph dies, and as time passed, the rulers of Egypt forgot about Joseph and his legacy
2. They eventually enslaved the Israelites, and forced them, and no doubt others, to work for the Egyptian empire

B.Along comes Moses

1. Saved at birth by his mother
2. Raised in Pharaoh's house
3. Ran from Pharaoh's house to the wilderness for 40 years after killing a guard
4. Called by God to return to Egypt to free God's people

C.God comes through in bringing His people out of Egypt

1. By plagues that wore down Pharaoh
2. By parting the Red Sea
3. By drowning the Egyptian army

D.When all was said and done, they were able to rest

1. Rest from their forced labor
2. Rest from the journey
3. And they did rest - for about a half inch
  - a) That is the distance between Exodus 15 and 16
  - b) In real time that would be about a month

E.It took all of a month away from Egypt before the Israelites started clamoring to go back to Egypt

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1. They remembered the wonderful food they had to eat
    - a) Which was probably far less in reality
    - b) But when you get all dreamy for what you have always known, what difference do details make
  2. So they start to grumble and complain that they want to go back to Egypt
    - a) The land they knew
    - b) It didn't matter that they were free, bound by no chains
    - c) They would rather go back to the familiar bondage of Egypt than the scary waters of being free men
- F. This sounds like another part of Scripture
1. In fact, I have little doubt that this story about the Israelite Exodus is in the Bible for this very reason
  2. To point us forward to the next story
  3. Remember when I talked to you about "Types" in the Bible - a person or event that foreshadows another event in the NT
    - a) While the Exodus from slavery to freedom in the promised land is obviously a type - from slavery to sin to the freedom of the kingdom
    - b) This specific event may or may not quite qualify - I'm sure I can find theologian on either side of the fence (but when is that not true)
  4. Let's go to the NT to see what I am talking about and how this fits with grace - Galatians 3:1-5
- II. The works of the law or faith
- A. Verse one could have been Moses response to the Israelites
1. "You foolish people! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes you saw God deliver you!"
  2. Just like the Israelites wanted to go back to Egypt, too often we run from the idea of grace rather than embrace it with open arms
  3. Both groups were redeemed, but both turned their backs on their freedom
- B. In Galatians, Paul makes a protracted argument to the people about why they would start with Christ and then give in to the Judaizers and head back for the works of the law
1. Paul does not mince words when he opens up with "You foolish Galatians"
    - a) This is one of those areas that we, in our modern sensibilities find less than kind
    - b) But Paul is not really trying to make friends - he is trying to get their attention
    - c) Plus, rhetoricians in that day had much latitude in open debate - so this is not just Paul being upset, but it is the expected manner of address when one is making a strong point

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- d) In addition, some of you may know one of the words for foolish in Greek
    - (1) Moros
      - (a) We get our word moron from it
      - (b) It refers to one that is mentally deficient or plays the part of a fool morally or spiritually
      - (c) But that is not the word here
    - (2) Anoētoes is the word
      - (a) It suggests one who has the ability to think and reason, but fails to use that ability
      - (b) So one that is choosing not to think through something
  - e) So Paul's point is obvious that the Galatians are being illogical in committing to the message of the gospel by grace and then giving in to the Judaizers message of the law
2. Paul says that Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified
    - a) The word picture for clearly portrayed is announced on a poster
    - b) It was as if it was publicly set out for all to see
    - c) Which also shows what is central to not only Paul's theology, but the faith of all of Christianity
  3. How was it clearly portrayed?
    - a) Acts 14:1-3
    - b) Iconium is in Galatia (its a region, not a city)
  4. Paul now starts a line of questions
    - a) Did you receive the Spirit from the law or from faith in the message of the gospel? - v.2
    - b) Are you seriously, after starting with the Spirit, trying to end with the flesh? - v.3
    - c) Have you experienced so much in vain? - v.4
      - (1) Possibly a reference to verse 5 - the miracles
    - d) So does God give you His Spirit and work miracles through the law or through faith in the gospel? - 5.v
- C. Paul is making a very straight forward case for the Galatians that it is by faith in the gospel that all of these things happened
1. It is by God's grace that they heard the message of the gospel
  2. It is by God's grace that they received the Holy Spirit
    - a) And given the events in the book of Acts, it may have been through special means
    - b) Perhaps speaking in tongues
    - c) But at the very least Paul confirms that miracles were done in their presence that they witnessed with their own eyes

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3. It is by God's grace that they have received from God all that they received, and still they want to turn back to the law that they knew  
D. Mind you that it was not that the Galatians, or even the Judaizers for that matter, did not believe in grace

1. They absolutely did
2. They just wanted to add to the work of Jesus
  - a) "Grace-a-lots believe in grace a lot. Jesus almost finished the work of salvation, they argue. In the rowboat named *Heaven Bound*, Jesus paddles most of the time. But every so often he needs our help. So we give it. We accumulate good works the way Boy Scouts accumulate merit badges on a sash." - Max Lucado *Grace*

III. And this is where we come into the picture

A. For the last few weeks we have talked about the grace of God

1. How incredible it is
2. How undeserving we are
  - a) How amazing God is to offer such a wonderful and costly gift to people that hardly appreciate the gift

B. No doubt we all agree that the grace of God is one of the most amazing bits of news the world has ever heard

C. Yet somehow, we are no different than

1. The Israelites that wanted to go back to the life they always knew in Egypt
2. No different than the Christians in Galatia that couldn't grasp that the grace of God is enough, and we need to add to it
  - a) They wanted to go back too
  - b) Go back to earning their salvation

IV. Going back to Egypt

A. Far too often, we as Christians want to make our way back to Egypt

1. We want to head back to the life we have always known
  - a) It's safe there
  - b) There is security in what we have known for years and years
2. We want to creature comforts
3. We want to rest in the familiar
4. It's like coming home after a long journey and falling into your own bed to enjoy the best night of sleep ever

B. What is it that we run back to?

1. If we are heading back to Egypt, what are we heading back to?
2. What is so familiar that we feel we can't abandon it?

C. While this one is not directly a part of the illustration from the Israelites or the Galatian believers, sin itself can be one thing we run back too

1. Sin often has a familiarity to it that we feel brings us comfort

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2. Even though we know we have been set free from sin, and we may even appreciate that fact, we find ourselves heading back to what we have always known
    - a) Sadly this is not unlike prisoners released from prison
    - b) For some it is fear of freedom - because of the security they have known in the prison system
    - c) For others, they get out of prison and fall right back into the same patterns and lifestyles they knew that got them into prison
  3. Usually, for Christians, this results from a misunderstanding of grace
    - a) Either we have not come to really understand the grace of God
      - (1) It has not changed us
      - (2) It has not transformed our hearts
    - b) Or we think we understand it, can even talk the talk, but in the end we really just abuse the grace of God
      - (1) We think that God is supposed to be forgiving so we can behave how we want
      - (2) We covered this in great detail in Jude when looking at the false teachers
- D. What I really want to cover is our running back to our lifestyle of striving and trying to earn our salvation
1. I think this is why an extended look at grace is so needed in the church today
    - a) And trust me when I tell you that we have not even scratched the surface of God's grace
    - b) I have been telling you throughout that if you wring out the Bible, grace would come dripping off of every page
      - (1) Whether grace is mentioned or not, we see grace all throughout the Bible
    - c) We need an extended look at grace because we are so apt to run back to what we have always known
  2. Most of the time we are not conscious we are running back to the familiar
- E. Let's slow down for a second, and consider why I call it the familiar
1. For many of us, we may have been trying to be good enough for God
    - a) Let's face it, that is one of the main things that separates Christianity from all religions
    - b) In all other religions you have to work hard to be good enough for God
    - c) In Christianity, it is impossible to be good enough for God
      - (1) In fact, many people consider that an insult
      - (2) How can you possibly say that I am not good enough for God
        - (a) I'm a great person

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- (b) I do great things
- (c) I help the poor, I give to charity, I help at the senior's center, I deliver food to the elderly
- (d) Kids, teens, adults and pets all love me - I have to be doing something right
- (3) But the reality is, we, by nature are sinful, and nothing we do can remove that sin
- d) In many ways that is the bad news - the outlook is bleak
- e) But the good news (the gospel) is that God did it for us
  - (1) We don't have to strive and strain and work for His approval
  - (2) We only have to accept what He did for us
- f) Many of us come out of that life where we feel like we have to be good enough for God - but that is just not true - in fact it is the polar opposite
- 2. For others, and this is related, you have lived your life seeing the reward that comes from doing well, or doing right
  - a) You lived a merit badge life
  - b) You do this good thing, you get rewarded - you serve the community in this fashion and you get this reward to prove how special you are
  - c) We have talked about this before, that we even do this in church
    - (1) You have perfect attendance in SS
    - (2) You memorized all of Psalm 119
    - (3) You put together the best church picnic in history
    - (4) Is there any thing wrong with giving rewards or recognition?
      - (a) Certainly not!
      - (b) It's when we start to believe our own hype - when we trust in our church rewards that things begin to get out of control
      - (c) The greatest solution to that is to seek a humble attitude about what commendations you receive
        - i) It's not me
        - ii) It's the Lord - He chose to use me, and I am grateful
- 3. This is why we seem to want to go back to Egypt
  - a) We want to do it ourselves
  - b) Or to help Jesus in our pursuit of holiness
- F. There are two glaring problems when we try to go back to Egypt
  - 1. First, we are declaring God's work insufficient
    - a) "Thanks Jesus for dying on the cross to set me free from sin. Now I am going to work really really hard on these sins so we can be as close as possible."
    - b) So Jesus frees us from sin, but we have to work to earn God's love

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- c) Jesus' death on the cross was not strong enough to really free you from your sin?
- d) Something is wrong there
  - (1) I dare say that if most of us realize what we said, we would be mortified
  - (2) Because we just changed our theology so significantly
- 2. Second, when we think we have to help Jesus along, in essence, being good enough for God to love us, "How good is good enough?"
  - a) What if God's expectation is a score of 80 and you score a 79?
    - (1) Do you miss out because you did not measure up to God's standard of goodness?
    - b) What if being good enough involves doing just one more thing?
- G. Some people think they have the answer for this
  - 1. Do more
  - 2. Be Better
  - 3. Do more, and you will be saved
  - 4. Be good and you'll be okay
  - 5. Do right and you'll be alright
  - 6. Do. Be. Do be do. Do be do be do.
    - a) You know the song!
    - b) Fun Scooby Doo fact, Frank Sinatra's rendition of strangers in the night is where Scooby got his name
- H. The problem with this philosophy is that it assumes that God saves good people
  - 1. So if we are good, God will save us
    - a) Pray five times a day facing east
    - b) Stay sober
    - c) Pay your taxes
    - d) Pray the rosary
    - e) Keep the Sabbath
  - 2. But the Bible says just the opposite is true
    - a) It is not the healthy that need the doctor but the sick
    - b) I came to seek that which was lost
  - 3. Even though so many people embrace the philosophy of being good, no one seems to be able to answer the question that our eternal destiny hangs on: How good is good enough?
- V. God's solution to this dilemma: Embrace the Grace
  - A. Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by grace you have been saved, and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God."
  - B. We need to embrace the fact that we bring nothing

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1. We can add nothing
2. The only way we belong in the picture at all, is the sinner that is clueless he even needs grace until God brings the grace
  - a) We are the one that was unaware of our own spiritual condition
    - (1)It's funny because when you read earlier in Ephesians 2 that we are spiritually dead in our sins, many people are put off by that
    - (2)They don't like thinking of themselves as incapable of fixing anything
    - (3)But that was our condition before Christ
  - b)After Christ, the role we play is the grateful follower of Christ that He would "shed His grace on thee"
    - (1)You and I did nothing to earn God's grace before
    - (2)He gave it to us, which brings glory to Himself
- C.Paul gives us the proper perspective in Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us..."
  1. That means we can say no to returning to the labors of Egypt
  2. That means we can say no to the life we have always known, and embrace the life of freedom that God intends for us
  3. It means we should never hear the words of Paul applied to us "You foolish Almontians, who has betwitched you? Are you so foolish, after beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"
- D.The grace of God - His solution for us means we can live in humble freedom and submission to Him
  1. We do not need to be insulted when we are declared incapable of bettering our situation
  2. We embrace our helplessness and the One that offers help
  3. Let me close with this illustration, borrowed from Max Lucado's book *Grace*
    - a) READ: Closing illustration from chapter 4