

5. The Great Commission

Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 1:3

Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mark 16:15-16

¹⁵ And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Acts 1:3

³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Grace

Jesus forgives His disciples

Last week we saw that the Gospel of Grace is not just a Gospel that saves us, but a Gospel (or good news) that forgives our sins for all our life. That this Gospel that Jesus died to give us is not just the entrance ticket to our salvation, but the key to all of it. We looked at how Jesus, when he had risen from the dead interacted with his disciples and their failures. We saw that in some of the biggest failures and Jesus (although he addresses the sin and failures) immediately responds to them with love.

- The two on the road to Emmaus – they had given up, they were confused and bewildered. They were heading home lamenting that they thought that Jesus was the one. Jesus opened their minds and helped them to understand the things concerning Himself.
- The disciples in the upper room had fled Jesus just 3 days before, and when Jesus appears he tells them twice, Peace be unto you. He shows them his hands and opens their minds so that they see and understand.

- Thomas, who tells the other (who see Him) that he will not believe. Jesus doesn't confront him, but deals with his disbelief by telling him to touch him so that he might believe
- Peter, who denied Jesus 3 times. Jesus does not rebuke him, but deals with the disbelief and sin, and immediately tells him to, "feed my sheep" encouraging Peter with the work that God has for Him. Not more than 2 months after Peter's denial, he is boldly preaching to Caiaphas in the same court that Jesus was tried in, proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God.

Jesus died to offer forgiveness of sins, and when He interacts with His disciples, he shows the extent of Grace by loving them in some of their worst states of dis-belief.

Grace is for us

We concluded that the Gospel is not just a message for the lost, a saving message, but the lifeblood of the Christian walk. The Gospel is not just for the lost, but is relevant for us to live our daily lives.

Grace is a word that we Christians through around a lot. We use it in many ways, but often never truly understand the significance of the word. Grace is the love of God shown to us that draws us to him and works in us to help us to live the Christian life. *Grace is the unmerited favor of God to us.*

Definition of Grace:

Grace: (from Vines Expository Dictionary of the New Testament)

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G5485&t=KJV>

(b) subjective,

(1) on the part of the bestower, the friendly disposition from which the kindly act proceeds, graciousness, loving-kindness, goodwill generally, e.g., [Act 7:10](#); especially with reference to the Divine favor or "grace," e.g., [Act 14:26](#); in this respect there is stress on its freeness and universality, its spontaneous character, as in the case of God's redemptive mercy, and the pleasure or joy He designs for the recipient; thus it is set in contrast with debt, [Rom 4:4](#), [16](#), with works, [Rom 11:6](#), and with law, [Jhn 1:17](#); see also, e.g., [Rom 6:14](#), [15](#); [Gal 5:4](#);

(2) on the part of the receiver, a sense of the favor bestowed, a feeling of gratitude, e.g., [Rom 6:17](#) ("thanks"); in this respect it sometimes signifies "to be thankful," e.g., [Luk 17:9](#) ("doth he thank the servant?" lit., "hath he thanks to"); [1Ti 1:12](#);

In light of this definition of Grace, listen to

John 1:14-18

¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of **grace** and truth. ¹⁵ (*John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'"*) ¹⁶ For from his fullness we have all received, **grace upon grace**.^[d] ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; **grace** and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God,^[e] who is at the Father's side,^[f] he has made him known.

This undeserved favor does not come on its own, it comes with the blood of Jesus. He made this undeserved favor, this forgiveness of sins, possible by the shedding of his blood on Calvary. This is not just a onetime event, but an eternity long favor of God for you. Jesus forgives you and God loves you – regardless of your actions. This favor is not separated from the Gospel.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul is writing to the church at Colossae. He is writing to Christians, and mid-way through his letter look at what he rights.

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now I would remind you, brothers,^[a] of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

[vs. 1 had Paul reminding brothers (Christians) of the Gospel. This gospel is not just for the unsaved, but is the basis for the Christian life. The lifeblood of all that we do. We cannot live the Christian life on our own, but it is the Grace of God that flows through us that accomplishes His purpose through us. There is not pride in this it is not us or our worthiness, but God's Grace.]

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

The entire New Testament is loaded with commands of how to live the Christian life. Commands that we could not possibly keep. Lists of commands that we cannot live up to. But it

Gospel 3-8

Grace 9-11

is not up to us to live up to them, it is God, who lives through us that immerses our lives in Grace (forgiving our sins and helping us to be what we are to be) that accomplishes the work of the Gospel and helps us to live in the manner that He requires.

Philippians 2 follows this same pattern by first telling of Christ, and his death and suffering for our sins, then commanding us to live the Christian life, but it is not us, it is Christ in us that lives it in us.

Philippians 2:5-13

Gospel 5-11

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,^[a] ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[b] being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Grace 12-13

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Evangelism

So how does this all work out into evangelism? Simple. The favor of God rests on all men who accept Jesus. The love of God is the chief root of all longings, and it is available to everyone who believes. Jesus is not “A” way to God, He is “The” way to God.

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Our understanding of the grace of God towards us should drive us to want to share this with others. Our forgiveness and right-standing before God is so incredible, so amazing that it will overflow into praise for God and telling others.

Matthew 13:44

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then **in his joy** he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The Gospel is a message of Grace. Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice for all sins, and He is the rightful king of all. Whether we submit to him or not, Philippians 2 tells us that someday everybody will submit to Him. Jesus is not an option, but the king. All authority has been given to him on heaven and on Earth.

1. **What are some of the things that “all authority” on earth would be comprised of?**
2. **What are some things that all authority in Heaven would be comprised of?**

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

The Great commission does not tell the disciples to just go share the truths of the Gospel, but to do three things. None of these three things are possible without Grace.

- **make disciples** – That is to make followers of Jesus. They need to know the Gospel, be filled with the knowledge of God, and living a life in the obedience and pursuit of Jesus.
- **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is a physical act, but I believe is also representative of a complete understanding of the Gospel of Grace. The act of baptism is a representation of the knowledge of God’s washing away our sins in the blood of Christ. This sounds a lot like Grace to me.
- **teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.** Impossible – without Grace. This is the essence of the Christian life, and the source of the proclamation of the Gospel. This part of the command we said last week we could not do – how are we going to share this with others – the answer is Grace.

3. **How do we show Grace to our children without failing to discipline?**
4. **How do we show the Gospel as a message of Grace without making it a list of rules?**

I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is a great promise of Jesus to his disciples. I am with you always. Understanding that we cannot accomplish the Christian life, and we cannot live up to the life that Jesus desires for us we need not only His grace for our failings, but his assistance and presence. Jesus promises to never leave us not only as a reassurance against the scary parts of this life (as we sometimes take this verse to mean) but as a seal on this impossible command. He is reminding us that we cannot do this of our own power. The Great Commission is not something that we make up our minds to do, roll up our sleeves, and dig in (although there is a certain resolve to live a life that follows Christ). **It is a command to live in the power of the Spirit, surrounded by Grace, and to be so filled with an excitement and understanding of the effects of Grace on my sin that I want to share the hope that is in me with others.**

The Gospel: Hope & Grace

If we look at 1 Peter we see that the format for witnessing is our lives set on the hope of Grace causes others to ask about our hope – A life so centered on the gift of God’s Grace is different – my sins are forgiven, and I can face tomorrow. This is radically different than a life set on the things of this world.

1 Peter 3:13-17

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

But the message doesn't end there. The rest of the chapter is a reminder of the Gospel. You see, we cannot have a hope without the Gospel. We cannot have a hope for the future without Grace.

1 Peter 3:18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered^[a] once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which^[b] he went and proclaimed^[c] to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because^[d] they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.