



CHRIST'S COMMISSION FELLOWSHIP

Los Angeles

DGROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE
APRIL 27, 2014

EVIDENCE: What is *Grace*?

WORD:

The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;
Acts 11:22-23

In any circumstance, people are always looking for evidences, for proofs. In the legal arena and medical fields, we often look for evidences – evidence of guilt or innocence; evidence of effective treatment or failure of treatment. In the same way, when we declare ourselves to be Christians, people will start looking into our lives looking for evidence of Christ's presence. The question is: do they see Christ in our life? Do they see the grace of God at work in our lives?

Christianity is not just a topic of discussion or another religion – it is a way of life. Some people claim to be Christians for 20 or more years and yet their life does not reflect transformations caused by having Christ in one's life, then they are not true Christians. Christianity is living a life given to us by Jesus Christ, a life reflecting transformations and renewals brought about by God's molding and grace.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. (John 1:1-4)

These verses refers to Jesus Christ, the **Word**, He is the Living Word. . . the Promised Word, the fulfillment of God's promise. He was the Word made flesh and dwelt among us. We are made witness to His glory – the glory of the only Son who came to live among us, the only One who is full of grace and truth. It is only Jesus Christ who is described as the bible as "full of grace and truth"

*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John *testified about Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. (John 1:14-17)*

What then is GRACE?

Grace has been at work for us since Adam and Eve were sent out of the Garden of Eden. If you look at Matthew 1, you will see the lineage of Jesus. . . from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Rahab, Jesse, David, Solomon, all the way to Joseph, the husband of Mary. You will notice that even Jesus' ancestry sinned. . . Abraham denied his wife, Isaac did that too. Jacob stole his brother's birthright, Judah sold his brother to slavery, Rahab was a prostitute, David was a murdered and an adulterer . . . all of them fell into sin. This makes us realize that GRACE covers every sin. Grace covers ALL sins.

恩典 This is the Chinese word for Grace, *Chen*, which means to stoop or bend down. God in His infinite goodness and mercy stooped down to pick us up from the miry clay. We were covered in soot and mud, covered in sin. . . and God hates sin. There is no such thing as a big sin or little sin – every sin is sin in the eyes of God, making us all unworthy. . .but God did not think twice about giving us mercy and bending down to pick us up . . . and clean us up through His Son, Jesus Christ. He sent Jesus Christ to die for us, so that we can have righteousness through Jesus Christ.

Justice vs Mercy vs Grace – What’s the difference?

Justice – *Justice is getting what you deserve.* If we break the law, the judge of the court will give us a sentence, a sentence we justly deserve.

Mercy – *Mercy is not getting what you deserve.* Mercy is deliverance from the justice we deserve. Mercy is not getting the consequences of the crime we committed, not getting eternal separation from God which is the payment for our sin.

Grace – *Grace is not getting what you deserve and moreover receiving what you do not deserve.* Grace is not only being delivered from eternity in hell but in addition to that we have been given God’s love and been adopted to become co-heirs with Christ. This is what Jesus did on our behalf.

Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits upon the undeserving. It is a self-existent principle inherent in the divine nature and appears to us as a self-caused propensity to pity the wretched, spare the guilty, welcome the outcast, and bring into favor those who were before under just disapprobation. Its use to us sinful men is to save us and make us sit together in heavenly places to demonstrate to the ages the exceeding riches of God’s kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **A.W. Tozer**

Types of Grace:

1. Common grace
 - Matthew 5:45
 - Given to all, given to everybody. . . all of us receive this grace
2. Conscience
 - Romans 2:14-15
 - This is by default that laws that God has written in our hearts. This is the norm that we follow irregardless of whether we have Jesus Christ in our lives or not
3. Saving
 - Ephesians 2:8
 - This is the grace that is available to all of us however, we cannot receive this saving grace unless we receive the gift from God. We cannot claim to have saving grace IF we do not receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.
4. Enabling
 - 1 Corinthians 15:10
 - The apostle Paul says that he cannot brag about what he has done for without God’s enabling grace it would not have been possible. Often times we do not believe that we can do things but with God’s enabling grace, we will be able to complete our assigned tasks. Remember that God does not call the equipped, He call us and then equips us. He chooses us and then gives us the grace and the ability to complete His mission for us.
5. Transforming
 - Ephesians 2:10
 - This is the grace that enables us to have transformed lives. No matter what our past was, no matter how chaotic and dark it was, it is only through God’s transforming grace that we can move from a dark past to a bright future, from hopelessness to a life filled with hope. But this can only happen if we decide to obey and follow Jesus, to be molded and transformed into His image and likeness.

John 1:14 shows us that we cannot separate grace from the truth. John 8: 3-11 tells us of a story of an adulteress who was brought before Jesus to be judged. Instead of giving a decision, Jesus bent down on the dirt and told them that ‘whoever among you who has no sin be the first to throw the stone.’ No one threw a stone at the woman. After that Jesus looked at the woman and said “woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?” She answered, “No one Master.” And Jesus says “neither do I. Go on your way and from now on do not sin.” The grace of God says “*I don’t condemn you even though you were caught red-handed*”.

All of us have sinned, but Jesus says “neither do I condemn you” – that is grace. But truth says “Go and sin no more”. Once we receive the grace of God – grace is not grace without truth -- once we receive the grace of God and still go on sinning, we have not really received the grace of God. When we receive the grace of God, this establishes a new relationship with us making us into a new creation. This should be coupled with the truth – that in this new relationship we have to sin no more.

The Old Testament were under the law, and the New Testament was under God's grace. We also have to remember that even in the Old Testament, God's grace and mercy was already evident. Consider the Israelites when they were in the desert traveling to the Promised Land. Although they grumbled and complained, God continued to show them grace and mercy. This shows us that even in the Old Testament, Jesus' grace and truth was already present but it was in the New Testament that He was revealed. It was in the New Testament that Jesus paid for our sins, so that we may receive God's grace of salvation.

Let us constantly remind ourselves of this truth:

Jesus laid His life for me;
Jesus gave His life for me;
Jesus lives His life through me.

Today, there are still many people who do not know who Jesus is. . . and yet many of us are content being by-standers, not taking an active role in sharing God's free gift of salvation. Let us not be negligent of this responsibility. Let us become beacons of God's light so that people will see Jesus in our lives.

Christians were not promised a problem-free life. We still encounter trials and problems, or even illnesses but the difference is as Christians, we know that God's grace will see us through difficult times.

Consider Pastor Regie's illustration of the egg, the eggplant and coffee beans.

An egg when placed in boiling water will harden and even crack. Some Christians, when placed in boiling water harden their hearts against God.

An eggplant when placed in boiling water will soften and become soggy. Other Christians when placed in boiling water become discouraged and depressed, they give up.

Coffee beans on the other hand, when placed in boiling water release a sweet fragrant aroma. Let us be like coffee beans, that when we undergo trials and difficulties, it brings out the best in us. . . it brings out the grace of God in us. And other people will see the work of God in our lives, they will see the result of the grace of God in our life.

Would you rather be an egg, and eggplant or a coffee bean?

Works: Journaling task

1. Meditate on your favored position now in Christ. How have you responded to God's grace? Are you growing more and more intimate with Him? Why or Why not?
2. Meditate on Ephesians 2
G – Gap between us and God was removed and we were brought near to God (Ephesians 2: 13)
R – Reconciliation with god and others was made possible (v 14-17)
A – Access to the Father was made available to us through prayer (v 18)
C – Citizenship in Heaven was guaranteed (v 19-20)
E – Edification towards holy living has started. Grace has not only saved us but led to our sanctification. God's grace will compel us to love, trust and obey the Lord.
(CCF archives)