

Grace and Truth

by Paris Reidhead

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's truth in order to experience His love and mercy, and that faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word.

Duration: 34:32

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 119:105, Matthew 22:37, Matthew 28:19-20, John 1:14, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21

Topics: "Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by reading John 1:14, which states that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, revealing the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the order of grace and truth in the Christian life. They also mention the concept of identification and indwelling, where believers are crucified with Christ to have victory over themselves and allow Christ to live in them. The speaker then references W.B. Riley's message about the fullness of Christ, highlighting the dimensions of Christ as our Savior, sanctifier, healer, and coming King. They encourage the audience to study the Word of God in order to comprehend and appropriate the grace of God in their lives.

Transcript

The last three words of the portion read for us this morning might serve as a text if you wished it to. Certainly it serves as a point of beginning this message that we have called the Christian life in full view, that I might give you this anchor to our thinking. Let me read this 14th verse again, John 1, 14.

And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Always this is the order, whether it is grace and truth or grace and peace, grace is first. God did not owe the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world.

When God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, he was not paying a debt. The world had absolutely no claim upon God. He had given conscience, a monitor by which we could know the rightness or wrongness of our acts and attitudes.

And he had also given a revelation of himself, imprinting this upon the human heart, enabling us to know him by that conscience, that with knowledge, or that intuition, if you wish, whereby there's a light that lights every man that comes into the world. Creation testified to him the things which are made, bearing witness of the things which are not made, his eternal power and his Godhead. God didn't owe Christmas.

He didn't owe the sending of his Son. It was a gift, and it was a gift of grace. Grace means unmerited and undeserved favor.

And so we find that these words are always in this order, grace and truth be multiplied unto you, full of grace and truth. Grace comes first. Always this is the case.

It is that which has risen in the heart of God because of what he is. It isn't drawn from something outside of himself. If out of appreciation God were to do it, it would not have been grace.

It would have been gratitude, or it might have been recognition of merit. But grace implies there was absolutely nothing to call it forth. It began in what God is.

And since God is love in addition to all his other attributes, he decided before the foundation of the world that he would get for himself a people, a people whom he must redeem by the blood of his dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So in the fullness of time, the eternal Son was the Lamb slain. In all of God's calculations, Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, was the one by whom man would be redeemed.

And thus, grace had no beginning, that is, beginning in time. God didn't begin to be gracious when Christ came. He'd been gracious before the foundation of the world, for this is one of his attributes.

This is part of what he is. He didn't begin to be loving when the angels sang across the field of Bethlehem. His love had been from eternity past.

It was simply then that his grace was manifested. That was the time when the Lord Jesus Christ was revealed as the expression of the grace of God. Now since God gave his Son, since he allowed him to come, since he sent him into the world, we would expect that there would be a considerable body of truth related to him.

Even the gift is of grace, but God's grace wouldn't stop with the gift. It says grace and truth, grace and truth. And he is full of grace and truth.

He is the truth indeed, just as he is love. But with the Lord Jesus Christ came a revelation that really prepared the way for him, beginning with Genesis, concluding the Old Testament with Malachi. And on every page, every page of this book, we call it the Old Testament, but remember it's what the writers of the New Testament called the Scripture.

And in it is the coming of Christ set forth in shadow, in type, in picture, in ordinance, in direct prophecy, in commandment. All that would be done by our Lord Jesus is either intimated or it is stated in the Old Testament. And the Old Testament was the Scripture by which Paul preached Christ.

When he opened the Scripture, when he there in Damascus began to preach from the Word, declaring the things which were written, it was the Old Testament. There was no New Testament as such, of course. And thus we find that on the pages of the Old Testament is the declaration of Christ.

It is the Scripture, said he, which speak of me. We must recognize this. We must realize that added to this, the New Testament, the new covenant is an amplification and a fulfillment and an explanation of what is stated or suggested in the Old Testament.

So you hold in your hands or have in your home a Bible. And this Bible is the Word of God. It is stated as such, given by inspiration.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and it was given as it was breathed by the Holy Ghost. And men whom he chose received that which gave, recorded it for us, and we now have this book that we call the Holy Bible. And God has thus graciously provided us full and adequate revelation of all of his intent, all of his purpose, all of his plans and provision for us in Christ.

We are exhorted in the Scripture to study the Bible. We are commanded to do it. The Word of God that we are to study is not just the New Testament or a favorite epistle.

It is the book from Genesis through Revelation. We receive it all as the Word of God, and we are commanded to study it. The understanding that you have of God's grace is in direct proportion to your understanding of God's truth.

The maturity of your Christian life will be very little more than the understanding you have of the Word. It is possible, and this we must clarify, it is possible for one to understand all of the divisions of the Old Testament. You can divide the books according to the books of the prophets and the poets and the minor prophets and the Pentateuch.

You can divide it all up and get a scheme of it and understand the main theme of it and the key verse of it and have nothing more than the memory that would be surpassed by a tape recorder. This we understand. One can even derive the doctrines from the Bible, write them down and memorize what one has written and not have progressed.

But by the same token, allowing that your heart is a regenerate heart and yours is a redeemed spirit, the measure of your spiritual progress is almost in direct proportion to your understanding of his Word. Faith comes by hearing, hearing the Word. Faith has to rest upon the foundation of truth revealed.

Therefore, if you do not understand what the Word teaches, you do not understand what you should appropriate. It's imperative, therefore, that you recognize that the measure of God's grace in your mind this morning is in terms of the measure of your understanding of his truth. And if you do not understand the truth, then you've placed the limits of ignorance upon his grace.

You understand his truth and you've comprehended what you have read and studied, then you will recognize that there are areas of love manifest in provision that are before you. Grace and truth. Grace is the giving of God's love, and truth is the revelation of what he's given.

Grace is the unfolding of the mercy of God, and truth is the means by which you appropriate the mercy of God. Grace gave and truth explains what's given, and you can only enjoy that which you have seen as truth and have appropriated as the gift of his grace. These two are put together.

Unfortunately, it's so easy for us to be content with what we want from God. This is a habit of the heart. This is true in most areas.

You are today what you've wanted to be. You have achieved, to some degree at least, what you've wanted to achieve and have the instrument and the ability to achieve. But we are really, substantially, what we want to be.

And you are the Christian that you've wanted to be, and you know God as well as you want to know him. Perhaps you say, well I want to know him better. Well, you will.

Perhaps we can't push a button and have it happen today, but you're going to know him better. Rejoice and be grateful. He's given you a desire.

Deep is calling to deep. God doesn't give you a desire to mock him. But you know him as well as you want to know him.

You're as holy as you want to be. You're as much of a Christian as you want to be. You're as fruitful as you want to be.

Grace is given lavishly. Truth explains what he's given. But the measure you've put upon your own experience is what you've done with the truth.

This is the reason why he's given us the word and commanded us to study it. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. Therefore, if I can induce you in this first Sunday of the new year to give yourself in a new way to the study of the word, not just in some academic fashion, but in terms of the response to the prompting of the Spirit of God by a diligent attendance to the word of God, then you will have been profited greatly by this word.

But you must understand something of what is there in the expression of his grace, as something of what you're going to find in this word of his truth. Dr. Simpson, eighty years ago, formulated for the body of Christ a statement that had been never expressed before in church history or since the Reformation. Groups had formed around some neglected or recovered doctrine.

For instance, you find that the sovereignty of God, as he was seen upon the throne, was the foundation for the Reformation under Calvin and Knox and others in the lowlands. We find that there were other truths, justification by faith, for instance, which was the foundation truth of the Lutheran Reformation. It was John Wesley who joined to this testimony of justification by faith, another and essential testimony that the moment you're justified, you're regenerated, and the manner in which you find out you're justified is not by presumption but by revelation.

Each of the groups after the Reformation formed around some recovered truth. But as best I can understand the history of the church, Dr. Simpson was the first one who set about to establish a church, this church, not meeting in those first days in this building some four or five years afterwards before they moved here. But his concept was a balanced testimony.

He'd been reared in the best tradition of the Presbyterians, trained in the finest of colleges and seminaries, and had a great concept of reform doctrine. But through Major Whittle, son-in-law of D.L. Moody, and others of the men of his day, he came to a realization that there was much in Christ. He found that the Lord Jesus was full of grace, and truths that he'd not understood burst upon his mind and heart.

In his great physical sickness, when he felt sure he'd have to give up the ministry, he discovered that Jesus Christ is concerned about our bodies and would heal them. And so Dr. Simpson laid hold of the virtue and power and resurrection life of Christ and was healed. He realized that Jesus Christ was coming, a truth that hadn't been taught particularly by in the schools he'd attended, but was taught by George Pentecost, and Moody, and Whittle, others of the day whose influence and voice was great.

This truth he found to be in the Word. So he saw, in addition to Christ our Savior and Christ our Healer, that Christ was our coming King. Then, as he lived with his own personal heart need, as was the needs of

the people to whom he ministered, he studied the Word.

There were two great conflicts in the day. There was one group, essentially antinomian, that said, well, Jesus Christ saved us from all our sin. He died for us.

Nobody's perfect. We've got to live--no one can live without sin, and he'll just confess it, and he'll forgive it, and there isn't much beyond that. Another group said, no, he's going to do a work in your heart where he'll take out the old nature, root and branch.

And one was eradication, the other was suppression, and he couldn't fit into either. So he studied the Word, and he found that in addition to these points of view, there was one that he felt was more completely scriptural, that there was identification and indwelling, that we were crucified with Christ to have victory over ourselves, and Christ would live in us in order that we could walk to please him. And so there formulated a concept that he embodied in four expressions--Christ our Savior, Christ our Sanctifier, Christ our Healer, and Christ our coming King.

You'll notice that it was all in Christ. He sang so beautifully, everything in Jesus, and Jesus everything. I'm grateful for this and grateful to be an heir to this testimony and to this message.

I was so thrilled to read in the recent Alliance Witness the message by W. B. Riley. Strangely enough, I knew him personally and well as a lad in just 13, 12, and 13, and 14. He would come to our farm in Minnesota and hunt pheasants there.

About the only thing we could grow really well was ring-necked pheasants. And so some of our friends came, and so Dr. Riley and my father would go, and I'd tag along behind just to see him because I knew of him. And I'll never forget the day he reached down, for he was a large, tall man, put his hand in my head, and he said, son, shuffle, ruffle my hair.

I never did like that, but we had to put up with something along the way. And he looked at me and he said, son, someday you're going to come to my Bible school. Well, I had no intention of doing it, however did, and far sooner than was expected.

So he was both pastor and friend, teacher. And I'll not forget soon the day when I thought I'd have to leave school because of illness. Subsequently had an appendectomy, and undoubtedly the infection had gone through my system and kept me from being well that year of 1936, that fall of 36.

But I went in to see him previously, a year earlier, and had a cold, and I was thinking I'd have to do something about it. And I asked him to pray for me. He said, well, son, I'll be glad to.

But he said, I want you to go down Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock in Jackson Hall. Now, Jackson Hall was the auditorium of one of the classrooms for the Bible school and the Sunday school of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis. And he said, I want you to have Charles Ingersoll pray for you.

Well, Charles Ingersoll was an elder of the Oliver Presbyterian Church when T.J. McCrossan was pastor there. Mr. Ingersoll had a seat on the Minneapolis Board of Trade, engaged in grain business. God had wonderfully met him through the faithful ministry of his pastor, Dr. McCrossan, and undoubtedly had given to him a gift of healing.

For from that time on, people at any time of the day or night would call on Dr. Ingersoll, Mr. Ingersoll, this businessman, to come and pray for them. On one occasion, a lady from the church living next door to a Jewish family knew that the mother of the home next door was ill and dying. She went in.

They said, the doctors left. She'll be dead before morning. There's nothing more that doctors can do.

We're just going to sit here. They said, has he given up? Yes, it's hopeless and this is fatal. They said, well, would you mind if my friend from one of our church came and prayed for him? And they said, anything would be all right.

We don't mind. So late at night, Mr. Ingersoll came to the home. He gathered the Jewish relatives that were sitting around and said, now in the name of Jesus, one of your own countrymen, I'm going to ask God to heal this woman.

Now, the doctors have said she's dying. Yes. Will you write it down? And so they wrote it down, that the doctors had left, saying there wasn't anything they could do.

He'd come back, but he had other calls and that they were expecting her to die before morning. So they wrote it down, signed it, and gave it to him. And he prayed, simple childlike prayer in the name of Jesus.

The next morning, he called up and said, how is she? She said, well, right after you left, she became improved and she's eating her breakfast. The doctors have come and every evidence of the condition has disappeared. And will you come and tell us about Jesus? And writing of it, R. A. Torrey was engaged in mission work in his early years in Minneapolis, said, more people were won to Christ through this one ministry than for 20 years of Jewish evangelism in the Twin Cities.

And this was Charles Ingersoll. Dr. Riley had been greatly influenced by A. B. Simpson at Old Orchard, Maine. He was a frequent speaker there in the summer conventions.

And so he asked, because of this influence, he asked Mr. Ingersoll to come into the First Baptist Church. And every Sunday afternoon for near over 30 years, there was a healing service in the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis, Minnesota. And when I was sick that day, Dr. Riley says, I'll pray for you, but I want you to go down and ask Charlie Ingersoll to pray for you.

And you tell him I sent you. So I did. And how my heart rejoiced when I saw in this article the confirmation of this.

There was been a recognition by him and by many others across the years that in this testimony of the fullness of Christ, Christ our Savior, Christ our Sanctifier, Christ our Healer, Christ our Coming King, there are at least pole dimensions for the understanding of the truth. Now, in order that I might interpret it to my generation and to you, I have approached it not differently, but in a sense because these are my convictions earned, not inherited. And that is, you know, as Paul said, some people are free, they were born free, and others of us purchased it at great price.

And this happens to be my case. But I share them. But last year I sat before you, what I call the Christian life in full perspective, and gave to you in detail an outline.

I showed you how that in my view there were two points of God's dealing. Each was a crisis preceded by a process and followed by a process. The two points were being born of the Spirit and being baptized or

being filled with the Spirit.

You were born of the Spirit, but you weren't born full of the Spirit. And I saw how that in this first crisis, this way of coming to the point of being born of God, there was a process. The first process was that of being awakened.

It is the work of the Spirit of God to awaken. Then awakening issued into a second phase called conviction. It is the work of the Spirit of God to convict.

When he has come, he will convict. And conviction entered into a third phase called repentance. Conviction is a conviction of a crime, and repentance is a change of mind about the crime.

The crime is pleasing oneself, and repentance is the change of mind about one's worthiness to please and govern himself, and a renunciation of that right into the hands of the one to whom it belongs, Jesus Christ our Lord. So in repentance you have a change of mind from pleasing you to pleasing him. On the basis of repentance there is faith, the fourth phase in this process, heart faith that reaches out across 2,000 years to savingly embrace the Son of God.

And the fifth phase of this preparation is just a rejustification and regeneration. Justification happens in the legal department and it affects your standing before God. All your sin laid on Christ, and the righteousness of Christ laid upon you, so that you stand before him as righteous as is his Son.

Justified freely by his grace, justified by his blood. And in addition to this there is the regenerating work of the Spirit of God, wherein you are invaded by him, bringing life. You didn't have faith in the Holy Spirit, you had faith in Christ.

You didn't even realize that he would come, but he came, and he was the one who bore witness to your heart, enabling you to know that you had been born again. So we had this issuing into the crisis of regeneration, being born again by his Spirit. It is thus the Spirit of God who brings us to life.

It is the Spirit of God who presents Christ to the sinner. But just as there is a witness to the fact that you are born again, and we've stated repeatedly that the only one who has the right to tell you you're a Christian is the one who makes you a Christian, God. And he is the one who has the legal right to tell you that you've been placed in the family.

He is the Spirit of adoption. But in addition to this, there is the possibility of failure and sin, for you'll be tempted surely. After you've come to know him, there's still the possibility of sin and the likelihood of it.

So there is now begun a process. Temptation, yes, and failure with sin. Then there must be brokenness and confession.

There must be a recognition that you are to take the same attitude toward this that's occurred in your Christian life that you took toward all sin, for conjudging it, forsaking it, and confessing it, knowing then the cleansing of his blood. But it soon becomes too wearying to go through this, and you cry out saying, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Is there not victory for me? And then you realize that there were two people on the cross, that the day Jesus Christ died, you die. And we see identification with Christ.

We are crucified with him that the body of sin might be annulled or destroyed, that henceforth we should not be the slaves of sin. Oh, the joy of victory once and twice, over temperament and trade, over self. How wonderful it is.

This doesn't mean that one won't fall or sin, but it does mean there's victory. Sometimes people don't want victory, but victory there is. And it is to be appropriated if you understand that the day Jesus Christ died, you die.

But in addition to this identification, there is the matter of presentation, presenting your body to him. You presented yourself to the cross. Now you've learned you can't live the Christian life, and you can't do his work, his way, and that he didn't intend you to.

But he intended you to stay there, crucified with him, and to present your body to him, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, your reasonable service. You present your brain, that living in you, he can use your brain to think his thoughts, your hands, your feet, your heart, your lips, presentation. Then there's appropriation, faith that reaches out to appropriate the fullness of Christ.

I said you were born of the Spirit, but you weren't born full of the Spirit. He said be filled with the Spirit. And subsequent to regeneration, there's a crisis of death to self and presentation of all you are.

And this issues into another crisis, a crisis of the first time of your consciousness of his infilling, when you realize that some new relationship has occurred. This ought to occur shortly after you are saved. There ought to be no great, long period of time.

Then, of course, and when you've discovered that there is this crisis that is to be yours, that there is this possibility, you see something of where you're to go and how you're to go. Then we discover that there's the ministry of the Spirit-filled life. I've always seen this in five aspects.

First, the fruit of the Spirit. And secondly, there's the ministry of intercession, and the ministry of authority, and the ministry of ambassadorship, and the ministry of the gifts of the Spirit. A Spirit-filled ministry, not just in the energy of personality, but in the power of the resurrected Christ.

And finally, all of this issues into worship. Now, last year, on this same Sunday, I presented to you this outline. I've just given it to you.

I gave you a questionnaire. I told you on the first Sunday of July of the failure of my own heart and life, the disappointment I experienced when I found that there were those who were interested, but relatively few, as against the many that I thought should have been. But I've come to realize again that this was part of God's own discipline to my heart, and he's used it in a wonderful way as an instrumentality in my life in grace.

And I still have them. When the new pulpit was put in, the supply of these questionnaires was just left here. Every Sunday that I've been here, I've seen them, and they've been available.

Because this truth is God's truth. It's not something of my invention. It gives some scope to his grace, some insight.

This past summer, out in Minneapolis in ministry, I was asked if I'd give a message for publication. We sent them this one that was delivered on New Year's Day, the first Sunday of the new year. It was

published in the message of the cross.

People wrote in from all over and asked for reprints of it and copies of it. To my understanding, it has been reprinted in a smaller form. And I've had just a letter on my desk today from someone that had received the article, read it.

God had used it in their heart and life. Now, it's not my truth any more than the fourfold gospel expression with Dr. Simpson's truth of the alliance. Truth is the heritage of the body of Christ.

But the concern of my heart isn't that you should accept such an outline that I've arbitrarily prepared and every term might be challenged. That isn't the point. What I'm pressing to your heart today is that Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth.

And you need to understand the truth in order to comprehend his grace. And until the truth is burst upon your heart, his grace is going to be withheld from your heart, and you need his grace. Now, if you have other outline, other form, other expression, bless you, this is unimportant.

The important thing is that you should recognize that everything God provided in Christ, everything he purposed in Christ, was intended for the children of God. And all that he's prepared for them that love him, he wants you to appreciate. He wants you to appropriate.

And the exhortation of my heart to your heart this morning is that since Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth, and the only way you can understand the limits of his grace is to understand the word of his truth, is that you give yourself in new way and new measure and new degree to the study of his word during 1963, that you may comprehend the grace of God, appropriate the grace of God, grow in direct proportion to your comprehension and appropriation, that he see in you of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. You are satisfied with him, he's satisfied with you. The outline is here, it's of any use to you, well and good.

If it isn't, the word is here, and anything after all must be tested by the word, and the word is its own commentary and its own instruction. And so I exhort you, I entreat you today to recognize that Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth, and the only way you'll ever comprehend his grace is to understand his truth. And the spirit of God will be your teacher, leading you into everything that he's prepared for them that love him.

What is appropriate? As we come to the Lord's table, it is appropriate that you should abandon yourself anew and afresh to the commandments of his word, to give attendance to reading, for it's only as you understand his truth that you can experience the full measure of his grace. Shall we bow together in prayer? Our Father, we thank and praise thee that there have been those in days past who've given rich heritage to us. We thank thee for everything, everything that's built into any life and everything that's been built into ours.

We ask thee that we may be faithful in laying a legacy of truth upon the hearts of our children and spiritual children that are to follow us. We thank thee, our Father, for good men and true, such as we've referred to today, whose hearts hungered for thee and who wrote what they saw and shared it with us. And we ask thee that this year of 1963 may be marked, in this church at least, by a greatly increased attention to the reading of the word of God, the truth of God, and that together we may so lay hold upon it and so be gripped by it and so controlled by it, that our lives shall be Bible-centered, word-established, and that we shall understand his truth, experience his grace, and he shall get glory out of a people that have become

what he's intended them to be because they have appropriated what he's intended them to have.

We thank thee for all we've done in the year past. We thank thee, Father, that none of us are where we were then, but we ask thee, Lord, that in the year to come there might be such measure of growth far beyond anything we've expected. Let none of us feel ourselves too old in time or in the Lord to fail to appropriate and profit from the provisions of thy love.

We thank thee that Jesus Christ is full of grace and truth, and we long that our eyes of our mind be open, that we may understand his truth, that we may appropriate his grace. In his worthy, matchless, resistless name we pray. Amen.

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