

Simple Solutions to Complex Problems

We have been talking about simple solutions to complex problems. Someone said,
“Having problems may not be so bad after all.
There's a special place for folks who have none
-it is called a cemetery.”

Someone else said,
“The young man's toughest problem is to find a girl attractive
enough to please him,
-and dumb enough to like him.”

We all are all too acquainted with problems. We begin experiencing them from our earliest days-like the time you were lying in your baby crib when your bottle fell out on the floor. That was a problem. Or when you begin to walk, and you fell and bruised your leg. When you became older, sitting in your room with nothing to do because you were grounded was a problem. Not having enough money to buy the car you wanted was a problem. As we grow older, we don't stop having problems. They simply become more complex and more serious.

We must live with people to know their problems and live with God to solve them. And that's what we are trying to do in this series. Our theme has been the fact that although our problems may seem complex, and even overwhelming, God's answers to those problems are really very simple. This is God's world, and things work when you choose to live by His laws. So far, we have seen four simple truths.

1. Belong to the right family

The first step to living a life of victory in God's world is to become God's child, and we do that through faith in Jesus Christ as our personal savior.

2. Sow the right seeds

Doing wrong never turns out right, and doing right never turns out wrong.

3. Be consistent

Those who succeed the most in life may not be the smartest or the strongest, but they probably are the most committed. They do what they do well because they do it consistently.

4. Know and live by the truth

Whether you are talking about the physical, the moral or the spiritual level of truth, it is all unchanging. The reason that it does not change is that God designed it, and He does not change.

Live a Grace-filled life

The word “grace,” is one of the most important words in our Christian vocabulary. When we hear the word “grace,” we should think “undeserved favor.” Grace is God’s favor to us who don’t deserve it. It can’t be anything else. If we gave God something or traded Him something for His favor, then we would have to have something He didn’t already possess, and there is nothing like that. If God is going to show us favor at all, that favor must be undeserved.

Romans 5:19-21, “19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

God doesn’t want us to simply endure life. He wants us to reign in life. How can you reign in a sin-cursed world? You do it by the grace of God.

1. GRACE SHOWS FAVOR TO THE GUILTY

When I was a little kid, I would sometimes do something wrong. My parents would forgive me, but that didn’t mean they were happy with me. Sometimes there would be a sense of tension in the air. I was pardoned, but I didn’t have any sense of blessing being bestowed on me.

That’s where God’s grace is different. God’s grace is more than a pardon. Grace is first of all an attitude of favor from God. And God’s favorable attitude toward us turns into favorable actions.

In biblical days, when a new king took over, all those in the family of the previous king were exterminated. All members of the family of a former monarch had every reason to live in fear once the new king took the throne.

When King Saul and his son Jonathan had died in battle, Saul’s family fled for their lives, thinking that David would treat them like all the other dynasties of their surrounding

nations. Saul's son Jonathan had a son who was dropped by his nurse and crippled by that fall. For years he lived a meager existence in what we would call "the other side of the tracks." In all probability, he lived his life in fear believing that one day royal guards would be sent by the king to execute him.

One day king David began thinking about his old friend Jonathan. He asked if there was anyone left of the house of Jonathan and found out that there was one person- a crippled man named Mephibosheth. Instead of killing Mephibosheth, he brought him into his own palace and allowed him to eat at the king's table like one of his own sons.

This story is a picture of God's relationship with us. David took the initiative in searching out Mephibosheth. Even so, we didn't seek God. God sought after us. And Mephibosheth didn't just receive a pardon from David. He received David's blessing and favor. That's grace!

The hymn writer was absolutely correct when he wrote,
*Sin and despair like the sea waves cold
Threaten the soul with infinite loss.
Grace that is greater, yes grace untold
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.
Grace, grace, God's grace
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within.
Grace, grace, God's grace,
Grace that is greater than all our sin.*

2. GRACE GIVES STRENGTH TO THE WEAK

". . . Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" 2nd Timothy 2:1

It is not an easy thing to live a godly life in a world of trials and suffering. Some trials are like a hurricane. You have seen footage of hurricanes and tornadoes destroy buildings. Those buildings just explode when those twisters hit. And some troubles come like that; they just blow everything in your life to bits.

Other troubles don't explode you. They just weigh you down, like carrying a heavy sack of potatoes or rocks or a bale of hay on your back. Sometimes you feel like you can't carry that burden any longer.

It is no wonder that so many people abuse alcohol and drugs and some decide to check out permanently.

God's alternative to those things is his grace. It is his grace that gives us the strength to go on when we would otherwise quit. It is his grace that gives us the ability to believe

when we would otherwise stop believing. It is his grace that allows us to live with peace and joy when we would otherwise be in despair and hopelessness.

[Oswald Chambers](#) wrote, "There will come one day a personal and direct touch from God when every tear and perplexity, every oppression and distress, every suffering and pain, and wrong and injustice will have a complete and ample and overwhelming explanation." Until then, we have grace.

In the last two stanzas of "Amazing Grace," John Newton wrote, "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

3. God's grace transforms the sinner

1 Corinthians 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am."

We who know the Lord can say the same thing. We are not where we should be, but thank God we are not where we once were.

Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. ¹²It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

Notice that the grace of God within us is active in teaching us. God's grace changes our lives.

William Cowper was an 18th-century poet who lived a very wicked and depressed life. He was so bad that he was convinced that he was beyond God's grace and could never be forgiven. On three or four occasions he tried to hang himself and was eventually put into a mental institution. While in that institution, he found a Bible and read the words from

Romans 3:25, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God."

He said, "Immediately I received the strength to believe it, and the full beams of the Sun of Righteousness shone upon me. I saw the sufficiency of the atonement He had made, my pardon sealed in His blood, and all the fullness and completeness of His justification. In a moment I believed, and received the gospel." This once wicked man became the author of many well known hymns. One such hymn is entitled "There is a fountain filled with blood"

There is a fountain filled with blood Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains:
The dying thief rejoiced to see That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he, Wash all my sins away:
E'er since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme, And shall be till I die:
When this poor lispings, stammering tongue Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save:

4. Grace gives ministry to the Christian

Have you ever thought about the fact that the ministry God allows you to do is an act of his grace? Think about it this way. How involved in ministry would you be apart from God's grace? Is sacrificially ministering to people a part of your nature?

*Ephesians 4:7-8, "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.
⁸This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."*

It is God's grace that gives you the desire and the ability to serve him and to continue serving him. Your life is a spiritual funnel that God wants to pour his grace through in order to bless others. Just as there is saving grace, there is also serving grace, and we need to be thankful for both.

5. Grace is always available

"Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."

The word "access" implies the "privilege of approach" to a person of high rank." There is a beautiful picture of this in the book of Esther. Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, was made the king's bride. As you remember in the story, there came a time when the survival of her people depended on her ability to convince the king to spare them. The problem was that the king had not called for her, and to approach the king without his call could mean instant death. It all depended on whether or not he raised his scepter to signify his acceptance. If he didn't, you died. When Esther approached the king, his heart went out to her, and he raised that scepter signifying his acceptance.

The Lord's scepter is always stretched out to us in acceptance. There is never a time night or day when we cannot approach Him with confidence. It is because of the fact that we can now approach God and communicate with Him that we have the power to live differently.

6. GOD'S GRACE NEVER RUNS OUT

On the island of Trinidad there is a crater in an extinct volcano which is completely filled with pitch. This asphalt is hard enough for people to walk on, even though here and there gas escapes in bubbles from its surface. Train loads of full of asphalt are dug from this tar-like lake and used to pave roads all over the world.

It is said, that no matter how large a hole of asphalt is dug out, it fills back up within 72 hours. For over 100 years they have been taking shiploads of asphalt out of this crater, yet it remains full. They have gone down as far as 280 feet and still found this black, gum-like substance bubbling up.

The same is true of God's grace. It never runs out and never diminishes. No matter how terrible the sin, no matter how great the need, there is grace.

FINAL THOUGHTS

1. GRACE IS RECEIVED AS WE DECIDE TO OBEY GOD

If you place a bee in a large bottle and lay the bottle down horizontally with its bottom to the window, the bee will persist until exhausted in its attempts to find a way through the glass to the light. If only the bee would turn around and fly away from the window, it would find freedom through the open neck of the bottle. Sometimes we like that bee, move in the direction that seems right, rather than following God in what is right. We think we know the way out of the bottle of our problems when in reality, God is telling us to move in a different direction. He has a way out, and when we walk in His way, He extends His grace.

2. WE SHOULD TRUST THE LORD FOR MUCH GRACE

Our attitude Many times seems to be that God will give us grace, but only a little. Nancy Spiegelberg wrote:

“Lord, I crawled across the barrenness to you with my empty cup uncertain in asking any small drop of refreshment. If only I had known you better, I’d have come running with a bucket.”

I wonder if we don’t often crawl to the Lord with our small cups when He wants us to come running with buckets. If you find yourself beat up and defeated by life, you need to put away your cup and get out a bucket.

3. WE MUST ALWAYS BE READY TO GIVE GRACE

It’s common to believe in God’s grace but to be ungracious. We claim grace and forgiveness for ourselves, but we often demand that others always do what we think they should do. As people who receive grace, we must also extend it to others. It is a shame when people come into the church and instead of grace, they find condemnation. The church should always exhibit a nourishing culture of grace.

Are you living a “grace-filled life?” Living in the power of God’s grace will make all the difference in the world in your life and in the lives of those around you.