

## ***The Gospel of Grace***

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. This past Friday we had a powerful worship night with special guest Justin Rizzo. I was reminded about how God's amazing love for us empowers us to live for Christ in the grace of God. Scripture calls us to contend for the faith of the apostles. It warns us against those who distort the grace message by making people comfortable in their compromise in the name of living in grace.

***<sup>3</sup>I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. <sup>4</sup>For certain men have crept in unnoticed...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny...our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 3-4)***

- B. The foundational truth is that God loves us and empowers us to love Him with all our strength (Mk. 12:30). The Lord created us to love Him with all our strength. We distort God's grace when we do not interpret it through the lens of the first and great commandment.

***<sup>30</sup>You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. (Mk. 12:30)***

- C. Jesus defined loving God in terms of a spirit of obedience. The Spirit's ministry is to empower us to obey Jesus' commandments, which He comprehensively set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. There is tremendous life imparted into our spirit and soul when we love Christ in a spirit of obedience.

***<sup>15</sup>If you love Me, keep My commandments...<sup>16</sup>He [Father] will give you another Helper...<sup>23</sup>If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word...We will come to him [God's presence]. (Jn. 14:15-23)***

- D. The gospel of grace can be distorted in two ways: first, by people seeking to ***earn God's love*** and forgiveness; second, by a ***half-hearted response*** to receiving God's grace. In both ways, people can receive the grace of God in vain. Receiving it *in vain* means receiving it in a way that neither produces fruit in our lives, nor *confidence* in God's love and power with a desire to respond with *wholeheartedness*.<sup>1</sup>***We...plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain***. (2 Cor. 6:1)

### **II. GRACE, MERCY, AND JUSTICE**

- A. *Grace* speaks of receiving God's undeserved love and power. The evidence of receiving grace is ***confidence*** before God (even in our weakness), ***gratitude*** (without complaint, knowing that we receive more than our dedication deserves), and the ***motivation*** to love God with all our strength.

- B. Grace includes much more than mercy. ***Justice*** is *getting what we deserve* (God's judgment). ***Mercy*** is *not getting what we deserve* (God's judgment). ***Grace*** is *getting what we do not deserve* (access to God's presence, power, and favor in a dynamic relationship with Him). The idea of mercy emphasizes the aspect of receiving ***forgiveness***; grace adds the element of freely receiving God's ***enabling power*** in *gifts* (power), *fruit* (character), and *wisdom* (insight).

***<sup>16</sup>...come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace... (Heb. 4:16)***

**III. FOUNDATION OF THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**

- A. The theme of Romans is God’s righteousness and its power in our lives (Rom. 1:16-17).  
<sup>16</sup> *...the gospel of Christ...is the power of God to salvation [from the penalty and power of sin] ...<sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. (Rom. 1:16-17)*
- B. Romans 1-8 is the most complete presentation of the gospel of grace. In Romans 1-4 Paul establishes that all men are guilty and unable to save themselves. First he sums up the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), showing how all people are guilty before God (Rom. 1:18-3:20), and then explains how sinful people can be justified (Rom. 3:21-31) and walk in victory (Rom. 5-8).  
*Romans 1:18-32: The immoral person is guilty before God without Jesus*  
*Romans 2:1-16: The moral person is guilty before God without Jesus*  
*Romans 2:17-3:8: The religious person is guilty before God without Jesus*  
*Romans 3:9-20: All people are guilty before God; this is the doctrine of our sinful depravity.*  
*Romans 3:21-31: God’s solution is to provide us with the free gift of righteousness*  
*Romans 4:1-25: Salvation by faith is illustrated in the life of two famous Jewish fathers: Abraham, who lived before the law of Moses, and David, who lived after the law of Moses.*
- C. The fact of man’s sin and depravity (Rom. 3:9-20) is ignored by some. It is manifest in our sinful speech (3:13-14) and deeds (3:15-16), proving that all are sinful (3:17-18). Paul emphasizes the doctrine of depravity (3:19) to show that all are guilty before God (3:20). We realize the full meaning of grace when we understand that our sinfulness deserves God’s wrath. Many agree that all have sinned, but the phrase “No one’s perfect” reveals the widespread *shallow view* of sin.

**IV. THE REVELATION OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS (ROM. 3:21-31)**

- A. The foundational truth about grace is that the righteousness of God—the very quality of God’s righteousness has been freely given to all sinners who repent and come to Jesus in faith.  
<sup>17</sup> *For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. (Rom. 1:17)*  
<sup>21</sup> *Now the righteousness of God apart from the law [earning it] is revealed... (Rom. 3:21)*
- B. There are two expressions of God’s righteousness, imputed and imparted. The moment we are born again, He gives us the gift of righteousness to empower us live righteously. This is *imputed* righteousness, which gives us a new *legal position* before God (Romans 3-5); it is instantaneous. God also gives us *imparted* righteousness, which describes our *living condition* before God (Romans 6-8). This happens progressively, as we live in agreement with God and actively “live according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5) and “put to death the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13).
- C. Paul elaborates on the way of salvation by emphasizing how God’s justice is involved in giving us the gift of righteousness (Rom. 3:21-31). By understanding God’s justice, we realize that *all* can be saved, that we can stand *confidently before God*, and that we can be kept from the error of believing that there is *another way of salvation*, outside of Jesus paying the debt for our sin.  
<sup>21</sup> *Now the righteousness of God apart from the law [earning it] is revealed [made known], being witnessed by the Law...<sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith... (Rom. 3:21-22)*