

1. The Gospel of God’s Transforming Grace Makes Us Grateful (3-8)
 - a. Gratitude recognizes and appreciates the grace (undeserved generosity) of another, and expresses itself in words and actions
 - b. Gratitude goes to God, because His divine rescue of us is completely undeserved generosity
 - i. It recognizes God’s kindness, appreciates God’s kindness, and expresses this through words of prayer
 - ii. “We thank God always for you...”
 1. The word “thanks” is a compound Greek word, “good + grace” (*εὐχαριστέω*)
 2. The word “gratitude” and “grace” both come from the same Latin stem (*gratia*)
 - iii. God’s grace works our faith (v4)
 - iv. God’s grace builds love for each other (v4)
 1. “By this all people will know that you are my disciples – if you love one another.” (John 13:35)
 2. Such love for one another *evidences* that one is truly a disciple of Jesus, and Paul thanks the Lord for this evidence in the Colossians
 3. Do we thank the Lord for such evidences that we see?
 - c. It is God’s grace which roots both faith and love by “laying up our hope in heaven through hearing the gospel” (v5)
 - i. “God secures His salvation outside of our circumstances and experiences by rooting it to His Son, our Lord Jesus, upon whom we depend (faith) (v5)
2. The Gospel of God’s Grace Bears Good Fruit in Us Through Hope (6)
 - a. Paul refers in v5 to "the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you heard about in the gospel, the message of the truth."
 - i. And there is no sweeter message of hope in all the world than to hear God announce that when you get up in the morning miserable and depressed with a sense of guilt and estrangement before a holy God, you can go to bed that very night—this very night— with a quiet and peaceful heart knowing that every sin you committed in heart, thought, or deed, is forgiven and you are reconciled to the Almighty by the death of his Son. That’s the free offer of the gospel!
 1. And every day, every hour, we are being called to hope in something
 - a. Either in the gospel of God’s grace substituting His life to make peace with Him
 - i. In which my hopes and fears are addressed by the security of Jesus and His work, laid up in the heavens, by which I depend (faith) on Him to satisfy and make me flourish
 - ii. Therefore, I am freed and empowered to lay my life down for others because God generously gives me everything that I need in Him
 - b. Or, in the false hope of everyone else around me substituting their lives for mine
 - i. That is, we lose hope when people don’t live the way which we think will satisfy us, will make us flourish
 - ii. This, of course, leads to selfishness, to a lack of love, to bitterness, to rage, to envy, to immorality, to wickedness and death
 - b. We all, to differing degrees, live around the truth of the Gospel and don’t “get” it.
 - i. We grow, says Paul, by understanding all of its truth
 - ii. Bold Humility of the Gospel of the Cross

1. Your life will not be strengthened, transformed, built up, until you understand the doctrine of the Cross, the substitutionary exchange of the righteousness of Christ for the unrighteousness of sinners – ME!
2. Luke 9:20-22 – When Jesus asked Peter who he thought He was, Peter’s response of “The Christ of God” Jesus was pleased, but how did He respond?
 - a. “He forcefully commanded them not to tell this to anyone, ²² saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."
 - b. In other words, He talked about the gospel of the cross
- c. “In you” (who have already believed it)
 - i. The gospel is not just something for unbelievers, but it is the means by which believers grow and change to do good works
 - ii. It is a living things, a seed which grows into maturity, producing fruit of God’s Spirit *in Christians*
 1. It is the apprehension of God’s grace, and the gratitude and praise of God which comes with it, that is fruit producing
 2. Acts 20:32 – “I commend you to the word of *His grace*, which is able *to build you up.*”
 3. Titus 2:11-14
 - a. Grace (Christ appeared) brings salvation by:
 - i. training us to deny ungodly ways and worldly desires and to live godly lives
 - ii. waiting for the glorious appearing of Jesus, our great God and Savior
 - iii. This is the “already/not-yet” of the gospel
- d. It is the only hope of the world
 - i. The Gospel is the same promise and the same implications for *anyone* who trusts in Jesus
 1. Jesus is the way for all people, regardless of religious history or upbringing
 2. There is nobody too far gone in whom the gospel cannot be planted and bear fruit
 - ii. The hope for the world is the gospel of Jesus Christ – the mediator between God and Man
 1. This means that other hopes which we expect “outsiders” to conform to, are not the power of salvation or the power to grow and change for holiness and fruitfulness
 2. The means of growth and change is the same for all people: to hear and believe that Jesus Christ alone can reconcile sinful people to the holy God
- e. Because this announcement of God’s grace grows and bears good fruit in us *as it is heard and believed as the Truth*
 - i. A stage of renewal, revival, or growth is always the deepened gratitude because of the discovery of a new implication of what God has done through Jesus Christ
 1. Both for individuals and for a church
 2. We never “get beyond the gospel” or “go off the map” into something ‘more advanced’ – there is no ‘secret’ to living the fullness of life in God
 - a. “The gospel is not the first ‘step’ in a ‘stairway’ of truths, rather, it is more like the ‘hub’ in a ‘wheel’ of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C’s but the A-to-Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the kingdom.” (Tim Keller)

2. We are to flee wicked desires. HOW? “In the view of God’s mercies, offer up your bodies as living sacrifices...for this is your *reasonable* worship.” (Romans 12:2)
 - a. It is “reasonable”, i.e. ‘logical’, to give all of yourself to the LORD *because of His great mercies towards you*.
 - b. All that was expounded in Romans 1-11 about God’s grace: from election to justification to sanctification to glorification – all through the gospel work of Jesus Christ, centered upon His exchange of His life for ours and our sin for His righteousness
 - c. When our hearts grasp that Jesus died to rescue us from sin, that we have died to it (Romans 6:1-10), then how could we reasonably live in the things for which He had to come and die?
 3. We are to ‘not be afraid’ – HOW?! “Do not be afraid. I am the first and the last, the one who lives! I was dead, but look! I am now alive, forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and of Hades.” (Revelation 1:17-18)
 - a. LOOK AT THE CROSS!!
 - b. “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will he not also, along with Him, freely give us all things. Who can bring a charge against God’s chosen? It is God who justifies! Who can condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died, who was raised (even more!), who is at the right hand of God, and is also interceding for us...I am convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 8:32-34,39)
 4. All of our inner problems, our fears and anxieties and arrogance, our unloveliness and irritability and self-defensiveness, arise from a failure to functionally believe the gospel.
 - a. This means that we do not need our circumstances to change in order to live fully and rightly
 - i. Nor do we need some system to grow and change
 - ii. Nor do we need to activate some kind of inner power or gifting
 - b. We need to recognize, know, appreciate, and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and raised up to reconcile sinners to God *as the work of God’s grace alone* through faith in Him and His work alone
- iv. Because the gospel bears fruit *as I believe it*
1. There are variant degrees of “belief”
 - a. Factual Belief – “I’ve seen parachutes work.”
 - b. Theoretical Belief – “I understand how parachutes catch the air and slow one’s descent.”
 - c. Dependent Belief – “Open the door, I’m jumping out with my parachute!”
 2. The “belief” which transforms us, which grows and matures us, is not merely the head knowledge of objective facts (though it cannot be devoid of this), but the dependence and reliance which stakes one’s life, experiences, interpretations of my world and circumstances, upon it
 - a. Thus, believing the gospel in such a way means that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the lens through which I interpret everything around me and within me
 - b. My hopes, my fears, my sorrows are all piled upon Jesus as my hope
 - c. What am I hoping in today? For significance? For forgiveness? For acceptance? To justify my existence?

- v. We need to hear the hope of the gospel of God's great grace all the time:
 1. In Christ, you were chosen by grace, so you don't need to be that man's choice, but can speak for his good even if costs you his friendship (Eph 1:4; John 15:16; 1 Cor 1:27-28)
 2. In Christ, you were called by grace, so you don't need to need to be recognized by her, but can work for her good even if she never appreciates you (Gal 1:6; 2 Thess 2:14; 2 Tim 1:9)
 3. In Christ, you were sanctified by grace, so you don't need that man's respect, so you can speak for his good even if he despises you (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Thess 2:13; Rom 6:22)
 4. In Christ, you are being built up by grace, so you don't need her approval, but can work for her good even when she points out your failures (Col 2:7; Eph 3:17; John 15:16)
 5. In Christ, you are being sustained by grace, so you don't have to despair in grievous circumstances (Rom 8:28-32; 1 Pet 1:5; John 10:28-30)
 6. In Christ, you will be glorified according to God's grace, so you don't need to hear "well done!" from your boss, but can work to build him up without recognition, because you will hear "well done, good and faithful servant" from the Greatest and most Glorious Boss, not because of your great performances, but because of Jesus' performance on your behalf (Rom 8:21,30; John 17:22; 2 Thess 2:14)
 7. All of this grace for those who were hostile, foolish, blind, estranged sinners! (Rom 4:5; 1 Tim 1:15; Eph 2:1-7), so we don't need to boast in anything but the cross (Galatians 6)
- vi. The gospel is not that your performance is good enough, but that Christ's performance is, and you can have the credit for His work if you stop trusting in your own and come to as your only hope of Life
- vii. Thus, the question which we must ask daily is, "Who is my hope, and who is the hope of those around me?"
 1. Jesus changes the way that we see EVERYTHING!

This gospel of God's grace through the judgement of my sin upon His Son, Jesus, as my representative, is the means of my growth and change. The gospel is for anybody! It belongs to the very heart of the gospel that you don't have to be Jewish, or Anglo-Saxon, or free, or male, or even a good person in order to be rescued and transformed to new life by God through His gospel. It is a worldwide hope, bringing new life and flourishing joy throughout the entire world, and nothing else can behold the reality of my selfishness without refracting it, distorting it, or hiding parts of it, and yet also looks at the mercies of God without softening them, minimizing them, or belittling them. Only this gospel of truth, which you hear, is capable of softening a hard heart and binding it up to wholeness and the abundance of life.

This gospel is the voice of the Lord that strips the forests bare. It is living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit (Hebrews 4:11–12). It is like fire, says the Lord, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces (Jeremiah 23:29) and melts the heart of stone. It goes forth from his mouth and does not return empty, but accomplishes that for which he sent it (Isaiah 55:11). The grass withers and the flowers fall but the word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).

And therefore it will reach to every people and tongue and tribe and nation; the ransomed will be called; the full number of the redeemed will come in; the eyes of all true Israel will be opened; and the Son of Man will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. The wheat and the tares will be divided: one into the furnace of fire, the other into the master's granary. And those who have believed the gospel will shine like the Son in the kingdom of their Father. And they shall reign forever and ever in the kingdom of light.

This is the great global hope of the gospel! Let him who is thirsty come. You who already have believed, but have turned to carve out cisterns that cannot hold water, come again and drink! The gospel is still your hope and means of life. Let anyone who desires take the water of life without price. Receive the gospel. Hear it. Believe it. Stand in it. Hold firm to it. There is no other hope than "the hope laid up for you in heaven, which you have previously heard, the word of the truth, the gospel"

Human beings are 'meaning-makers'. We are constantly trying to discover the reasons, the purposes, the values, of the events and activities of our lives and the thoughts and intentions and loves of our hearts. The disappointments and celebrations, the joys and the sorrows, of our common human experiences, through the myriad diversity of individual lives, all share the same primary motivation: hope. We all place our hope upon something to give our lives meaning and significance, to fix what is broken and to protect us from harm.

And the particular hopes we entrust ourselves to in order to answer those questions of life, will radically determine the steps that we take in those flashes of conflict, those sparkles of joy, in the immediate and fleeting moments as well as on the path of the long defeat. What we functionally hope in, what gets us out of bed in the morning, shapes the manner in which we live, in every way, internally experienced and outwardly encountered.

Christians are shaped by gratitude. Gratitude to God for His great grace towards sinners. The greater the degree that we grasp and appreciate this truth is the greater degree that we are shaped into the humans which God has designed us to be. Our hope of living fully and abundantly is intimately tied to the hope which we have been given by God's great generosity and is expressed in overwhelming gratitude.

Let's take a look.