

The Transformative Power of Grace

1 Cor. 2:1-5

Introduction:

1. For Paul, the message of the cross was his message.
2. He describes it as the matter “of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3).
3. He describes himself as coming to the Corinthians “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,” but his message of Christ and Him crucified founded their faith on the power of God.
4. Paul had personally been transformed by this grace. He had gone from persecutor to proclaimer. Now he used the message of the crucifixion to transform others.
5. But it was an unusual message and although we are transformed by it, it is hard for us to manifest grace, especially in times of injustice, insult, and injury. And yet, this may be the time when the power of grace is most fully realized.

Discussion:

I. The message of God is unusual (1 Cor. 1:18ff).

- A. The world did not and does not entertain the idea of salvation coming as the result of crucifixion.
 1. Jews were searching for signs of the Messiah’s coming. Their expectation seemed to be that when their new king arrived, He would gloriously enter Jerusalem, take away the power of Rome and establish His place as ruler in a new Jewish kingdom. A crucified King was not a possibility.
 2. Greeks, on the other hand, searched for enlightenment. It appeared foolish to them to consider something like a crucifixion to provide advancement.
 3. We have people in similar camps today. Some are looking for the Messiah to come and establish a kingdom and rule the world. Others deny this and depend upon themselves and their own ideas to advance mankind. More and more they look like political parties each attempting to gain control to advance their particular perspective.
- B. What to some is a stumbling block and to others foolishness to us it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.
 1. For the King to be crucified seems to be weakness.
 2. But it is the power of God.

II. It is the power of God that is transformative (1:26ff).

- A. And so, Paul’s communication was not in superiority of speech or of wisdom.
- B. In weakness and in fear and in much trembling.
- C. He communicated the message of God—Christ and Him crucified.
 1. That is, by God’s doing righteousness and sanctification and redemption are

accomplished.

2. We speak frequently of the inspiration of Scripture and of its value for mankind.
3. In this communication the grace of God is revealed. That is why the origin of Scripture is important.
4. God said in Isa. 55:8-9, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."
5. It is beyond our imagination that the God of heaven, the great King, would stoop to the level of the cross to lift us from the pit. No King humiliates Himself. And yet, despising the shame, He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:8).
6. As the Servant of God our griefs He bore and our sorrows He carried. He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (Isa. 53:4-5). He was oppressed and condemned to death for our transgressions (Isa. 53:8). He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth (Isa. 53:7).
7. This message does its work in our heart to transform us so that we humble ourselves and receive the righteousness and sanctification and redemption that the wisdom of God grants us. But there is more to this transformation. Having been transformed we are met with the challenge to manifest this grace to others.

III. Manifesting grace in challenging times is transformative.

- A. It is one thing to receive grace, quite another to manifest it to others.
- B. What does the manifestation of grace look like? How is it communicated in real life settings?
 1. In the life of Jesus He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth.
 - a. What if He had responded in angry hostility?
 - b. He experienced injustice and responded with grace (1 Pet. 2:21-23).
 - c. When I experience injustice my response is hostility and anger. Call me a derogatory name, disrespect me, insult me and I want to riot in the street, burn down a city block, death and destruction is what you deserve and I want to give it to you! I want to crush and destroy! Is this what you deserve? Absolutely!
 - d. But this is not the way of God! And the cross is evidence of that.
 2. Paul was breathing out threats and slaughter until He was exposed to the grace of the cross. He was transformed. Now instead of threats and slaughter he is humbly accepting hurts and death (2 Cor. 4:7-12). In this way He is communicating grace (2 Cor. 4:13-17).
 3. Heb. 10:32ff encourages the endurance of sufferings. The section closes with the example of Christ, saying that He "endured the cross, despising the shame." It calls on us to consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (12:2-3). Verse 14 says, "Pursue peace with

all men . . . See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.”

4. This past week I learned of an incident that occurred at the University of Kentucky. A young woman was intoxicated. Repeatedly she used the N word and the B word as she insulted Kylah who was working at the dormitory desk. But while being insulted Kylah uttered no threats. She did not respond violently. She spoke out against the injustice but did not respond with hostility. Her mother commended her in a grand statement that highlighted the love, respect, honor, and grace that her daughter demonstrated.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/university-of-kentucky-student-kylah-spring-on-viral-video-of-racist-attack-on-campus/>

If you watch the video you will need to watch it all the way to the end. The mother's statement is at the end.

5. This appears to be giving in to evil. It appears that we should “fight” instead of pursuing peace. But grace is the power of God that transformed us. Grace transformed Paul. Grace transforms others. It is very powerful, but it does not transform everyone or there would be no suffering. It does not transform people against their will, but grace is the power of God for righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.

Conclusion:

1. Why turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:38-42)? Why manifest grace?
2. Because it is the wisdom of God. Because, like God, we are in the business of transforming the world by executing His kingdom in the world.
3. May we His people be used as instruments of His grace to transform hearts so that His will is done on earth as it is in heaven.