

## "Embracing Grace: The Gospel for All of Us"

Posted by Bob Young

I share with us today a new vision, a vision of the breath-taking scope of the gospel that helps us understand our relationship with Jesus by taking in the whole range of the Bible. I want to think with you about Adam and Eve, the fall, and the connection with the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. Too many have reduced the gospel to forgiveness from sins and a ticket to heaven. The message of the Bible, and the story of God, is actually much bigger and better than just that. It is an invitation to be saved by grace; it is equally an invitation to live a transformed life by it. The gospel is the good news that in Jesus Christ God is at work restoring broken people to full humanity by placing them in loving communion with himself and with one another. I believe that what I share can reach both believers and potential believers, as we wrestle with the complexities of a pluralistic world.

The Genesis story of Adam and Eve--human beings are—cracked dirt, "cracked eikons" (cracked images). We are tarnished images, we are cracked pots. We were created to relate to God and to others but broken through disobedience. We struggle with our dual nature: image of God, living beings; made for another world, living in this world. The net result is that all need restoration. The Bible is a story that shows the restoration is possible only through the Gospel: creation—loss—re-creation.

"The Gospel is the work of God to restore human beings to union with God and communion with others." Our greatest challenge in the gospel is selfishness. We are too individualistic; we have made salvation too individual. Individualism may well be the greatest barrier to embracing grace. Being God's "special creation" is about being in relationship with others and about embracing responsibility for the whole created world.

McKnight, *Embracing Grace*, Christians today have four gospels—I think perhaps there are more. These are basic ways people define Christianity: a Creation Day Only Gospel (I believe in God), a Christmas Day Only Gospel (Jesus is special—attend church at Christmas), a Good Friday Only Gospel (he suffered and died for me), an Easter Day Only Gospel (attend church at least on Easter), and a Pentecost Day Only Gospel (focus on events of Pentecost—Pentecostal, charismatic, and church emphasis). Fresh suggestion: the gospel itself concerns an entire weekend, from Good Friday through Easter morning, and beyond, and only when we grasp the significance of the entire gospel message do we see what it is all about.

The Gospel is about the restoration of "cracked eikons" (fallen humans) so that humans can be in union with God and in communion with the saints. Authentic faith comes in recognizing the simple, yet potentially transforming truth of the gospel message: God seeks to restore us to wholeness not only to make us better individuals, but to form a community of Jesus, a society in which humans strive to be in union with God and in communion with others.

### **Grace is always a part of God's Story**

Eden is an evidence of God's grace

    God's initiative, gift, commendation

    Human beings respond

    God reconciles, up or down, according to human choice

Cain and Abel is a story of grace

    Obedience and disobedience

Noah and Babel

Abraham—the promise is an evidence of grace

    The Promise leads to the cross

    The covenant/law leads to the covenant of promise/grace

Law is schoolmaster leads to grace in Christ

### **Humans respond to Grace**

Hut-building hedonist, Rom. 1

Fault-finding fundamentalist, Rom. 2

Block-stacking legalist, Rom. 2:1-11

Grace-driven Christian, Rom. 3-4

Thus, the gospel is a gospel of peace, a gospel of reconciliation, a gospel of destroying enmity. Eph. 2:11-21.

Good Friday—Jesus died.

Saturday—Jesus was in the tomb.

Sunday—Jesus arose.

From that time on—Jesus lives.

We have limited the gospel in its application.

We have correctly seen the parallel in Romans 6:1-6.

But we have not been nearly so vocal in saying that embracing grace requires that one live out the reality of grace daily.

- Saving grace, sustaining grace. Yes.
- Creating grace—recreating grace. Also.

This gospel, good news, is for all of us. None is excluded. The gospel is for the world, the gospel is for believers. The gospel is for pagans, the gospel is for Christians.