


Jesus—Outside the Lines
Part 1: The Perspective of Grace

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

2018.4.8



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —*Psalm 145:11*
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —*Joshua 22:5*

Questions for Reflection

- What from Sunday's message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Pastor Lanier noted that Ephesians 2:1-3 teaches that we come into this world **dead** spiritually. That means "inanimate" and "unresponsive". Do you know someone who is spiritually unresponsive? Read Colossians 2:13. Do you remember having been that way yourself? Tell us a bit about it.

- In Philippians 3:4-9, Paul describes how **he used to boast** about being acceptable to God. What does this attitude show about our view of sin? of God? of ourselves?
- Sometimes people will say, "*I need to 'clean up my act a bit' before I can come to God.*" What does this attitude show about our view of sin? of God? of ourselves?

Read Galatians 2:21. Did Christ **have to** die? Why or why not?

- What is the connection between "grace" and "gratitude"?



Application-Challenge

- Examine yourself for the "reward-based view of grace" (see the chart in the sermon summary).
- Who is someone you know who disagrees with you regarding lifestyle. Without compromising your morality or condoning sin, think of one concrete way you could initiate love toward him/her.
- In preparation for next Sunday, read Matthew 9, paying special attention to verses 9-13 and 35-36.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

Over the next four weeks, in our series entitled Jesus Outside The Lines, my prayer is that we all will be helped to view people God does. As we start, it's critical that we have a clear understanding of the grace of God. Our view of grace determines much of how we view God, ourselves, and the people around us. Most of us are familiar with the definition of grace as "the unmerited favor of God", but we run into trouble when we start incorporating the implications of grace into our worldview. Ephesians 2 was written precisely to counteract what many of us do with grace. Verse 1 says that we were DEAD. What power does a dead thing have to change itself? None! We weren't merely handicapped by our sins, we were **dead** in them. Powerless. Helpless. Verse 2 continues the bleak picture: not only dead, but also consumed by our passions... slaves to our desires... children of wrath. Keep that last phrase—"we were like the rest of mankind"—in mind as we move to v. 4-5. Remember, we were exactly like the rest of mankind. Nothing made us better, nothing made us special... **BUT GOD** pulled us out of death and made us alive because of **his** grace! Notice in v. 6, what is passive and what is active. God is doing every bit of the work here. We didn't raise ourselves or seat ourselves. There's no mention of what we have done to deserve this kind of favor from God. So that we won't miss the point, Paul makes it abundantly clear at the end of v. 5, and in v. 8-9: it is a gift of God that has nothing to do with us. No one may boast.

How incredible is our redemption! My freshman year of college a friend helped pull me out of a really dark depression. I was doing a lot of reading and research on different religions, but found that every other religion put the weight of enlightenment or salvation on me. I knew **that** wasn't going to happen! I wasn't even good enough for **myself**—why would a god find me acceptable? When my friend told me about the grace of God through Jesus, it was the most beautiful thing I could imagine hearing. I didn't have to be good enough. In fact, it was a prerequisite to following Jesus that I acknowledge I'm not nor will I ever be good enough. He covered **my** sin with **his** righteousness. He covered my shame and guilt with grace upon grace upon grace. Christians ought to be the most gracious people on earth, and yet too often we are judgmental—or even hateful. We must not compromise on biblical morality; Jesus never did that. Jesus was more moral than we are, and yet he didn't drive away people who lived contrary to His standards. He drew them in. The problem lies not with maintaining biblical morality, but in our perspective on grace, and how it impacts our worldview. I think we can view grace in one of two ways. It's either a reward or a gift—and that has serious implications for our view of God, of ourselves, and of others.

If we view grace as a free gift from God, we view God as the most loving, forgiving Being in the universe. Instead of making us work our way to him (which could never happen) God supplied a way for us. We'll also understand the depth and weight of our sin. We aren't special, we aren't even "good." We are just adopted sons and daughters of a gracious God. And our view of others is that they are not morally inferior to us or unenlightened—they're just like we were: DEAD! They simply have not yet received the gift that we have. But if we view grace as a reward it changes everything. Rewards are given in recognition of service or accomplishment—as if God, after watching you and decides that your accomplishments are worth his favor instead of wrath. If grace were a reward, we would view God as the great taskmaster in the sky, watching everything we do to weigh the good vs. the bad. Just an impartial judge, whose love and mercy don't even come in to the picture. We don't credit judges with being gracious, loving or merciful when they allow people to walk free when they're proven by evidence to be innocent! This view of grace strips God of his power to redeem and nullifies the work of Jesus on the cross. If I my good outweighs my bad, and grace is merely a reward for my good behavior, then why do I need Jesus? We either become perfectionists—or we throw our hands up in the air and accept defeat. But what about our view of other people? This is the portion that I really want to discuss to set up the next few weeks of this series.

If we view grace as God's reward for our goodness, faithfulness, or even our belief in him, we are making God's grace man-centered rather than God-centered. With a "rewards" view, if I am a recipient of God's grace, then there **must be** something about me that makes me better than someone who have not experienced his grace. And this is where things get really dangerous and damaging. We view others as "less than" because they have not received God's favor. In this view, other peoples' sin isn't something they need to be saved from, it's something they need to fix about themselves in order to receive God's grace (as we think we did). Do you view other people's sin as something that they need to be rescued from and something that is hurting them, or do you view it as a stain that they need to clean before God—or you—will have anything to do with them?

	If Grace is a Free Gift	If Grace is a Reward
Then God is...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> loving generous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> taskmaster impartial judge only
and I am...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> undeserving grateful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> slave to perfection defeated
and others are...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> candidates for God's grace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> morally inferior to me undeserving of God's favor

When Jesus saw crowds, he had compassion (Matthew 9:35-36). He saw people who were so destroyed by the power of sin in the world that they had no hope, no power to change. He didn't wait to see a change in them, he brought change to them (Romans 5:6,8). The perfect, holy, almighty God of the universe doesn't wait for us to get our lives together, or fix our problems, or turn away from our sins before he will initiate love toward us. We mustn't have higher standards than Jesus did! When we encounter people who don't believe in Jesus and whose lifestyle doesn't line up with ours, our

impulse must not be to think about what they need to change, what sins they need to stop committing. Instead, we should mourn the way that sin has distorted their reality and caused so much pain and burden in their life. Remember: dead things have no power to change. When we take a proper view of grace, the people around us aren't heathens who need to clean themselves up, they are broken, harassed, and helpless, and in desperate need of grace and love. Jesus didn't expect people to heal themselves, he **brought** healing. He didn't expect people to clean themselves up, he **washed** them. **He washed us!**

Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time

We rightfully would be more amazed by a cure for AIDS than we would be by one for acne. So, are we "amazed by grace"? It depends upon what we think we were saved from.

This week we'll study Titus 3:3-7...

3 We ourselves also once were foolish
disobedient,
deceived,
enslaved to various lusts and pleasures,
spending our life in malice and envy,
hateful, hating one another.

4 But when the kindness of God our Savior
and His love for mankind appeared,

5 He saved us,
not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness,
but according to His mercy,
by the washing of regeneration and
renewing by the Holy Spirit,
whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

6 so that being justified by His grace

7 we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Monday

- Copy Titus 3:3-7 on a 3x5 card, and slowly and prayerfully review it ten times throughout the day.
- What are your general impressions of this passage?
- What "big ideas" come through?

Tuesday

- List the six ways Paul describes himself and all non-believers (v. 3). Look up each word in a dictionary.
- Verse 4 says that two things "appeared" from God. What are they?
- Based on these two descriptions, compare and contrast God and man.

Wednesday

- Verse 5 tells us upon what basis God **did** and **did not** save us. What are they?
- Try to square our **actual deeds** (v. 3) with our **claim of** "deeds done in righteousness" (v. 5)!
- How are "the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" acts of **mercy** (v. 5)?

Thursday

- Verse 5 says that we are saved according to God's **mercy**, while v. 7 attributes it to God's **grace**. Look both words up at <webstersdictionary1828.com>. How do they differ? How are they similar?
- Relate these concepts to Pastor Lanier's chart (see the sermon summary).

Friday

- What is the significance of the fact that "saved" (v. 5), "poured" (v. 6), and "justified" (v. 7) are in the past tense? What tense is our heirdom (v. 7)? What is the significance of this difference in time frame?
- Look up "hope" at <webstersdictionary1828.com>. Note definitions #2 & 4 (the biblical definitions)—especially when contrasted with definition #1 (which can apply to lesser hopes). What do you learn?

Saturday Time to prepare our hearts to gather with God's family tomorrow. Read Matthew 9, then...

- From v. 9-13, how would you characterize the heart of God?
- From v. 35-38, how would you characterize the heart of God?