

FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH

Sunday, December 12th, 2021, 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2147

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IPAD TEXT - John 1:14 - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Marvelous Christmas words, these - perhaps the greatest ever recorded. John, writing years after the mere *sentiment* of Christmas would have worn off, reaches for better, stronger, more accurate words. What had changed his whole life as he ponders the Incarnation of God the Son, and what *continued* to fill his mind with wonder years later, was the *glory* of the Incarnate Christ - **“We have seen his glory....”**

And what was this glory like? What was it that John’s mind and heart still warmed to? What was it that was so unique about this singular event? He tells us. The glory of God the Son Incarnate was its ***fullness of grace and truth***. “This is what we saw,” John would write. This is what reverberated with glory. We saw, for the very first time, God’s redemptive reach. And it brimmed and overflowed with ***grace and truth!***”

And we ***know*** we’re on sure textual footing with this emphasis. Three verses later John repeats the very same two terms he used in verse 14. We know John ***intends*** to mark off the grace and truth that came in Christ’s Incarnation because John himself ***tells*** us that this Christmas display was unique in human history - **John 1:17 - “For the law was given through Moses; *grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*” -**

IPAD TEXT

What else can John mean but that *prior* to the Incarnation there had been scant measure of grace and truth. Christ and Moses are purposely set in opposition to each other. True, there had been manifestations of divine grace, and true, there had been revelation of truth in the Old Testament. But it is still the case that John mentions Moses and the Incarnate Christ, not to show *similarities*, but to *distinguish* them from each other. There was *law* dominating from Moses to Christ. And then there came, in a unique dawning, a fullness of grace and truth in Christ Jesus alone.

This is our privilege today. We want to drill down into what John wanted so passionately to communicate when he identified the Incarnate Christ as the One *“full of grace and truth.”* And the conclusion I want to reach needs to be announced up front so you will see more clearly the path we’re taking all along the way. I want to say it very carefully. The Incarnate Christ, God the Son, came that first Christmas *“full of grace and truth”* in the sense that He was the *source* of *all* grace and all truth - even those partial manifestations that were revealed long before He was born in Bethlehem.

In other words I think John is reminding us there would never have been *any* tolerating grace for any sinners whatsoever and there would never have been *any* revealed truth to deliver fallen minds from the bondage of Satan’s lies whatsoever were it not for the provision made in the Incarnate One who came *full of grace and truth.*

I have three thoughts. I think the Biblical logic works something like this:

- 1) **IF EVERY BLESSING WERE FORFEITED BY MAN'S SIN THEN I MUST ASCRIBE EVERY BLESSING RECEIVED TO GRACE**

And the logic goes farther. Our Christmas text singles out Jesus Christ as the one who brings *all* the blessings of grace. This makes sense because He, and only He, provides the redemption from the alienation from God and punishment that sin brings.

If it's true that sin leaves us under the just wrath of God, and if it's true that sin leaves nothing but life under the ruin of eternal separation from God, and if it's true that Jesus alone - in contrast to Moses or any other religious leader or prophet - Jesus *alone* is the mediator who brings divine grace to this fallen world, then there is *no other source of grace possible outside of Jesus Christ.*

What that long sentence means is *every* instance of grace received throughout the whole Bible, and all of recorded history, is provided either looking *forward* in anticipation to the Incarnate Christ who *would come* full of grace or looking *backward* in fulfillment to the Incarnate Christ who *came* full of grace.

There is no other **source** of grace for sinners deserving punishment than Jesus Christ. **Every** instance of grace, however ordinary and commonly bestowed, every single instance of divine kindness, every commonly received divine benevolence reaches our undeserving hearts as it flows from God's grace and favor flowing **through** Jesus Christ. This was true **before** the birth of Jesus and **after** the birth of Jesus.

That's what John was marveling over as he sited the Incarnate Christ alone as the one who came "**full of grace.**" He meant if you and I are going to find **anything** from God's hand other than the divine displeasure and alienation our sins deserve, we receive that good from God's mercy reaching this whole world through the Mediator who came **full** of this grace - from the One who was born in Bethlehem **overflowing** with this grace. John means no grace of any measure can reach us through a source **other** than the Word made flesh.

Remember, if **every** blessing has been forfeited by sin, **no** blessing can come except by grace. And, says John, "**....grace and truth came through Jesus Christ**"(1:17). That word, "**through**" is the important word. John clearly means that even divine grace that came **before** Christ, came **through** Christ. There is no other source for any blessing received.

I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that I have daily breath and health. I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that my mind isn't so darkened by sin that I can never come to understand saving truth. I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that I have any power whatsoever to stand today against temptation to sin. I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that I can offer any prayer whatsoever with the expectation of being heard. I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that I can endure sorrow with any possibility whatsoever of being divinely comforted. I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that I can approach death with any hope of eternal life. I owe to **grace**, and therefore to **Christ**, that I can face eternity with any hope of happiness and joy.

This is John's point. If grace came **through** Jesus Christ (1:17), anything I owe to divine grace I owe to Christ Jesus. There is no hope of grace arising through the mere **sentiment** of God. Father God, being just, holy, and eternally turned away from any iniquity, has no **just** way of reaching out to this rebellious planet than through the redemptive grace bestowed through God the Son, Jesus Christ.

2) **ANY TRUTH THAT DELIVERS THIS WORLD FROM THE BONDAGE OF SATAN'S LIES COMES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

IPAD TEXT - John 1:17 - "For the law was given through Moses;

grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

John surprises us by equating Christ's fulness of **grace** with His fulness of **truth**. Just as all grace that blesses comes through Christ, all truth that frees and delivers comes through Him as well. And the humbling reminder is our minds are naturally darkened to the things we most need to know.

John's gospel consistently sees eternal issues tied up with the light of truth and the natural darkness that won't receive it:

IPAD TEXTS - John 3:19 - “And this is the judgment: the *light* has come into the world [that's Christmas], and people *loved the darkness* rather than the *light* because their deeds were evil.”

John 12:46 - “I have come into the world *as light* [that's Christmas], so that whoever believes in me may not *remain in darkness*.”

O, the wonder of the miracle of the Incarnation with regard to our capacity to even give consideration to divine saving truth. The coming of Jesus marks a turning point in what saving truth can do in the sin-darkened mind.

Paul can't help but ramble on and on about the effect of Christ on the mind of people once blinded beyond hope to the truth they most need:

IPAD TEXT - Romans 5:17-19 - "If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. [18] Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. [19] For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

Christmas is not the time of year to ignore theology. Christians bring a totally different *understanding* to this wonderful season. And we *must* know what that understanding is. Adam's sin *darkened* all mankind. It turned us all against saving truth. Christ's coming and atoning death on the cross changed that for everyone. Through Christ God extends resistible grace to all men - **"Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men"(5:18).** -

IPAD TEXT

Not everyone will be **justified** (saved), but Christ has brought a light that **“leads to justification and life for all men”** (18).

John says the very same thing in simpler terms in this very letter -

John 1:6-9 - “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. [7] He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. [8] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. [9] *The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*” - IPAD TEXT

Note carefully. Not everyone is **saved**. Not everyone **yields** to the truth. But absolutely **everyone** has been **“enlightened”**(9).

John says Jesus, God the Son, came **“full of grace and truth.”** We’ve already examined His grace. And He came into this sin-darkened world brimming with **truth**. He is called the **“Word”** all through the first chapter of John’s Gospel because through Him we see what God most wants to communicate.

John says a mouthful when he says **“grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”(1:17)**. He means you and I can’t get to the truth about God unless we get it through Jesus Christ. He means we will always be **wrong** about God unless we come to Him **through** Jesus Christ. He means we haven’t got a ghost of a chance of assessing and forming our own opinions and judgments about what

God **should** be like or how He **should** bend to our ways. The truth about God comes **through** Jesus Christ.

Our minds will remain in the **dark** without the Incarnate Christ enlightening them. That first shining **star** in the sky wasn't just a magic trick. It pictured the **light** that was being born through the womb of that young virgin in that smelly stable.

Here's what John is saying. If we picture this world as though Christ had never taken on human flesh in the Incarnation we will never picture it as dark as it would actually be. As wicked and perverse as things are now, we can't even imagine a world in which grace and truth had **never** come in Christ Jesus.

To an even greater degree than we can imagine, falsehood would **everywhere** and **always** be mistaken for truth. **Everyone** would **always** be deluded by false hopes. **Everyone** would **always** deal falsely with his neighbor. We can't even picture what the world would be like if **everyone always** substituted a lie for the truth.

O, don't pass lightly over the revelation that Jesus Christ - and **only** Jesus Christ - came "**full of grace and truth.**" Should we not all cry out with the apostles, "**Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life!**"

I have to hurry on to my final point:

3) **IF YOU NEED GRACE AND IF YOU CRAVE TRUTH, COME TO JESUS CHRIST**

I would just make one more observation from our text:

IPAD TEXT - John 1:14,17 - “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....17....For the law was *given* through Moses; grace and truth *came* through Jesus Christ.”

Two observations. “....*the law was given through Moses.*” Moses *gave* the law of God. Grace and truth came *through* Jesus Christ. Moses merely passes the law along. It came external to his person. If not Moses, then someone else could have delivered the written code.

Not so with grace and truth. They were never given as *independent entities*. They don't exist apart from the One *through whom* they were manifested. If you want to know the law you have but to read it recorded. But if you cry out for God's grace today, or hunger to know the truth today redemption and eternity, you must come to a Person. He is still the One *“full of grace and truth.”*

The need for Jesus has never changed. Every man, woman, and child old enough to understand my words, has lurking in the depth of his or her heart a memory of failure that only needs slight fanning to pain the conscience. Everyone hearing these words has some deed which, if only exposed before all, would bring shame and terror.

Surely we are all in need of the One ***full of grace and truth***. There is both - grace that ***pardons***, and a true promise that is ***certain***.