

GRACE Great Good News!

November 2001

The heart of this ministry is the message of the cross. This message can be summed up in one word – GRACE – and one name – JESUS. This month, I came across an article “The Way of the Cross” by Dudley Hall, a great summary of this message that has been so helpful to me. I have provided excerpts from this article on the back of this newsletter for you. This newsletter has become a sharing of my pilgrimage of living out this message, with the hope that you will be encouraged. Following is a personal testimony of the way of the cross.

God initiates a vision. In my first newsletter in July 2000, I shared Colossians 4:17, “Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it” (see also Acts 20:24). These verses reveal that ministry is a gift from God, and is not initiated and planned by man. There was a period of time a few years ago that I focused on the “how” to share the gospel message of Christ. God used that time to transform me to focus on the “Who” of the message – Jesus Himself. The message is not about Jesus, the message IS Jesus! The more I focus on (behold) the message Himself, the richer and more glorious the message is revealed to me, and the more I experience the message simply overflowing me to others in transforming ways I could never plan.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

God affirms my oneness with Him. It is through the cross where God literally recreated me to be one with Him. My sinful heart was not just changed, but was totally replaced with God’s very heart! Therefore, my honest desires (not the selfish ones) are the desires of God Himself! And my deepest desire is the heart of God the Father...to manifest His Son Jesus Christ Himself.

“Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” (Psalm 37:4)

God motivates me to pray to Him. My heavenly Father knows every need I have, yet He still wants me to ask Him. He delights when I relate to Him. Prior to knowing my oneness with Christ, prayer was a “work” that was up to me to do. I am growing to see that prayer is a “gift” of Christ’s life in and through me. For months I have been sensing pressure to make this ministry work out in the Greenville area. The pressure has been from my “good” self-efforts. God provides a daily cross to lead me to surrender my “works” to Him, and to trust the sufficiency of the life of Christ in me. This month I realized this need of surrender, and I was led to pray a simple one-word prayer, “Daddy!” And I experienced a fresh freedom as I focused on Him, and not on me.

I pictured how an earthly father takes his little son to a playground. The little boy doesn’t have to agonize to make sure he plays correctly to please his daddy. The father dearly delights in his son just as the son is, and the son truly is free to enjoy all that the father has provided. I can just imagine the little boy sliding down a sliding board and exclaiming, “Look, daddy!” Oh, what a delight that relates to the daddy! As I grow in experiencing the freedom of living in all the provisions in Christ, I more and more pray, “Look, Daddy!” acknowledging His presence and provisions, and trusting His faithfulness. After praying that little prayer this month, I was able to see an affordable small office space for lease in Simpsonville as a means to share THE message. “Thank you, Daddy!”

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba (Daddy), Father.” (Romans 8:15)

I am really excited about the little satellite office of Christ Life Ministries in Simpsonville near my home. I will continue to serve at Christ Life Ministries in Hendersonville each Thursday, and now I will be able to share more through the Simpsonville office on other days whenever I can be off work. In the Simpsonville office this month, I completed discipling sessions started a few months ago in the Simpsonville library with two special people, to whom God has revealed a healing freedom. If you know anyone who might be encouraged by this ministry, they can call 864-228-HOPE, or just drop by the little yellow house on Curtis Street in Simpsonville. Joy and I are leasing one small office in that house. Have a special Christmas! Gregg Gibbons

GRACE NOTE

The cross is not a contract by which I get to go to heaven later.
The cross is a relationship through which I get to know Christ now - moment by moment!

Excerpt from “The Way of the Cross” by Dudley Hall

The true message of the cross is the heart of God. Some misunderstand the cross, saying, “Jesus died for me and that is wonderful, but now we have to do something to make ourselves acceptable and win victories in life.” You can be sure, if their solution does not have the cross at the center of it, it won’t result in real victory. Victory is in realizing that at the cross God took care of all your adversaries.

First, He took care of your SIN. Colossians 2:14 says, “Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” When I go to the cross of Jesus, the indictment I see is “Dudley Hall – sinner, criminal, liar, selfish, arrogant.” Everything I’m guilty of is there. But when Jesus died, He cancelled it, He paid for it all! I can never be accused of it again. I am forgiven of all my sins. My righteousness is not dependent on my memory of sins committed and confessed, but on the blood of Jesus shed for me.

Second, SATAN was defeated on the cross. He was exposed publicly. If you ever really see what happened to Satan on the cross, you won’t have to be “devil conscious” anymore, unless you are deceived and believe his lies. Did the cross destroy him? No, it defeated him. His three primary tools were taken away at the cross (Colossians 2:15). The law...which was fulfilled by Jesus. Sin...all of that is forgiven. Death...the heart of death was ripped apart when Jesus died and was raised again and gave His life to me. So now without his tools of deception, Satan’s only hope is to deceive you with mirrors and smoke screens.

Thirdly, the cross dealt with my SELF. Galatians 2:19-20 says, “For through the law I died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” The law says that I must die to pay the penalty for breaking the law. How did I die? I died by receiving Jesus’ death as my own.

What about the less obvious benefits of the cross each day in the world? When man was created by God, he was given the assignment of ruling and subduing the earth. Man was given the creativity of using the minerals in the earth to make things. Man was given the intelligence to discover how the atom works. However, when man sinned, not only was his assignment perverted in his mind, but his ability was perverted as well. Man began to believe that he could accomplish his assignment without faith, without dependence on God. However, anything that is not of faith did not come through the cross. And God doesn’t do anything apart from the cross. The cross reduces man to the place where he has to believe and depend on God to get anything of eternal value done.

Now, go back to the more obvious adversaries. How do I receive victory over the guilt of SIN? *I believe.* I believe Jesus died for me and God accepted His death as payment for my sin. How do I obtain victory over SATAN? *I believe.* I don’t shout and scream to overcome Satan, but I believe he is defeated. How do I have victory over my SELF (being self-conscious)? *I believe.* I no longer try to measure up, but I now believe I was crucified with Christ and that I am one with Him and that God accepts me as He accepts Jesus!

I simply believe! I then can start operating in light of what I believe. If this works on the obvious things, it will work on the not so obvious things each day. You see, man does not like to live by faith. Faith takes things out of our hands and puts them in the hands of God. In my fleshly perspective, I still want to do it my way. I don’t mind giving God the glory. I’ll tell Him even before I start, “God, help me and I’ll give You glory.” I don’t mind giving witness along the way. I don’t mind quoting Scripture. In fact, I want to do all that stuff. I’ll “religionize” it as much as possible, but in the end, I want to do it myself. This is work without the cross.

Romans 11:37 says, “For from Him (God) and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever.” Everything starts with God (from Him). Everything is stimulated by Him and kept going by Him (through Him). And everything consummates in Him (to Him). In comparison, man starts with justified motives like: “It will help people...It will bring in money for the ministry...It’s the right thing to do.” Whatever good reason we have, we use it. If I start it, I must stimulate it, and when something is accomplished, I receive the glory. That’s not the way of the cross.

God likes for us to walk by faith because He wants relationship. He likes His children to trust Him, allowing Him to do things for them. If you’re standing at the crossroad in your life, keep believing and keep walking. There’s no turning back. Just understand this, it takes faith to please God (Hebrews 11:6). Whatever it takes to reduce you to faith will be your (daily) cross (Luke 9:23). It can look like your death, but in reality it’s your deliverance!

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