

Healing Grace

Part 4 of Good News About Grace

Psalm 147:3

Rev. Jean Smith

One thing I've learned my years as a pastor is that nobody sails through life without an occasional storm. We all have problems. We all have hurts. We all have hidden wounds and emotional scars that nobody else sees but we now they're there. Every once in a while we find ourselves in a similar situation to when we were hurt and we feel the pain all over again. Maybe it's not as intense as it first was, but we feel it and it's not much fun. It can hold us back and keep us from doing what we could be doing if we weren't in so much pain.

The source of our pain is usually always some kind of rejection that we've experienced. It may have been from our parents, or siblings, or spouse, or friends, or neighbors, or co-workers, or even a boss. I'll bet some of you can still remember things said to you, or done to you, years and years ago, that still hurt. We don't easily let go of our hurts.

Today I want us to look at God's **HEALING GRACE** and how He heals our broken hearts. That brokenness is ultimately caused by sin, our own or the sins of those around us. We live in a broken and sinful world. The toll it takes on us is great. It breaks our hearts. The Bible says in Psalm 147:3, ***"God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds."*** That's good news -good news about God's healing grace.

How does God bring healing to us? How does God bind up our wounds and heal our broken hearts? The Bible tells us that God heals us by changing the way we see things, by changing the way we think. He heals our brokenness by changing the way we think about Him and about ourselves. The Bible says in Romans 12:2 ***"Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."***

You might ask, "How is that going to change anything?" What's done is done. The Bible says, ***"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."*** (Proverbs 23:7) I'm not asking you to think your pain doesn't exist. I'm asking you to change the way you think about yourself. If you think you're a loser, then you'll go through life feeling like you can't win. If you think you're unlovable, then you'll go through life feeling unloved. If you see yourself as a failure, then you will go through life reinforcing that view of yourself. It's that simple. The Bible says our beliefs will determine our behaviors. The way we think determines the way we act.

Throughout our lives we pick up all kinds of beliefs about ourselves that simply aren't true. Maybe you had parents who were unpleaseable and that left you feeling like a failure. Maybe you had a teacher or heaven forbid, a pastor, who said something to you as you were growing up that left you feeling bad about yourself. Growing up, the adults around us and even our peers, shaped our perceptions about ourselves. The comments people make about us

are like looking into a mirror at a fun house. Some mirrors make you look taller, some shorter, some fatter, some skinnier. They distort your real image. When people make comments to us out of their own brokenness, those comments give us a distorted view of ourselves. They leave us feeling broken and hurting.

Today, I want us to look at how God sees us, what He has to say about us. He wants to set us free from the distorted images of ourselves that we've acquired over the years from the broken and hurting people around us. **God says five things about us that are true because of his grace.** If you let these truths shape the way you think about yourself, God's healing grace will be unleashed in your life. How does God see you because of His grace?

FIRST, GOD SEES YOU AS ACCEPTABLE BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE. That's some pretty good news. Most of us spend our entire lives trying to be accepted by others. The need to be accepted is behind most of the things you do in life. It influences the way you dress, the kind of car you drive, the kind of house you live in, the career you choose, the kind of activities you get involved in, the groups you join and so on. People do all kinds of things in an attempt to be accepted. I remember as a kid growing up, there were things I got pressured into doing because I wanted to fit in and win the acceptance of my peers. It was stupid but I went ahead and did it anyway. I remember my mother saying, "If so and so jumped off a bridge, would you follow him?" I said that to my kids as they were growing up until my youngest went off to college and took a video of him jumping off a bridge. That was his freshman year and just this year as a rising senior he's admitting how stupid that was.

We think if we're really cool, then everybody will accept us. We think if we do everything perfect, nobody will find fault with us or reject us. Unfortunately that's not the way it works. The Bible tells us that Jesus was perfect, yet he was despised and rejected by people. He was rejected by his own friends and neighbors. The problem was not with Jesus. The problem was with them. Sometimes we can do everything right and still not be accepted by others because of the brokenness inside of them. That's when we must remember how God sees us because of his grace. He sees us as acceptable. The Bible says in Romans 15:7 ***"Accept one another just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."*** (Romans 15:7)

As a believer, you have the complete and total acceptance of God because of His grace. He doesn't say, "I will accept you if you go to church each week." He doesn't say "I will accept you if you obey my commands." No. God's acceptance of you is not based on anything you have done or will do. It is based on what Jesus Christ has already done for you. Jesus has given His life on the cross for your sins and He will sustain you by his grace. He will heal your broken heart by His grace.

Most of you have received Christ as your Lord and Savior. You've invited Christ into your heart to make His home in you. You've said, "Lord Jesus, I believe. Help my unbelief." You've accepted Christ, but do you realize that God has accepted you? You are acceptable in His sight because of His grace. God has chosen you and He has made you acceptable because of His grace. 1st Peter 2:9 says, ***"You have been chosen by God Himself."*** (1st Peter 2:9)

Remember as a kid how good it felt to be chosen for something. Remember when you'd go out for recess and two captains would be appointed by the teacher and they'd alternate picking teammates until everyone was picked. It was great to be picked early. That meant you were either a really good player or the captain's friend. Either way that felt good. It was awful when nobody wanted you on their team. Those were the rejects. They were always picked last. The Bible tells us that we were picked by God before we were even born. The Bible says, ***"He chose us in Him before the creation of the world... In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons and daughters through Jesus Christ."*** (Ephesians 1:4 & 5) That means He chose you to be His beloved son or daughter before you ever did anything to deserve His love. He chose you because of His grace to be His, not because of anything you've done or ever will do.

Some people like to think God chose them because he could see that they would come to faith. But God chose you because of His grace and He gave you the faith to come to Him because of His grace. It is grace from beginning to end lest you have anything to boast about. You are acceptable in His sight because of His grace and He will always see you as acceptable. God will never reject you. The Psalmist proclaimed this truth when he said, ***"Even if my mother and father forsake me, the Lord will receive me."*** (Ps. 27:10)

SECOND, GOD SEES YOU AS VALUABLE BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE. You are of value. The world may consider you of value because of your net worth—how much you have accumulated, what your assets are valued at. If you have half a million in assets, the world says you're worth half a million. That's the way the world thinks. But God says you are valuable, not because of what you possess but because He possesses you. If you believe in Jesus Christ, and put your faith in Him, then you belong to Him. The Bible says, ***"You belong to God..."*** (1st John 4:4) You belong to the Lord and as such you are valuable. Everyone in the world is created by God, but not everyone belongs to God. When you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you enter the family of God and you become God's own son or daughter.

Another way we assess the value of something is by what others are willing to pay for it. If you own your home, it's only worth what someone else is willing to pay for it. You may have paid \$250,000 for your home, but if somebody else is only willing to pay \$200,000 for it, guess what—it's only worth \$200,000. It's worth whatever the market will pay and not a penny more. How much did God pay for you? The Bible says, ***"You have been bought and***

paid for by Christ so you belong to Him..." (1st Corinthians 7:23) By sending Jesus Christ into the world to pay the penalty for your sins and purchase your salvation, God made it very clear that you are valuable to Him. Isaiah 43:4 says, **"God says, 'You are precious to me.'"** (Isaiah 43:4) And He demonstrated just how precious you are by sending Christ into the world to die for your sins so that you can belong to Him.

THIRD, GOD SEES YOU AS LOVABLE BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE. There is nothing more healing to a broken heart than to be loved, really loved. When you've been rejected you don't feel very lovable. When someone has belittled you and put you down, you begin to think nobody can love you. But God says you are lovable. He says, **"The mountains and hills may crumble but my love for you will never end..."** (Isaiah 54:10)

There are two characteristics that make God's love so very different from human love. First, God's love is always consistent; it never waivers; it never fails. God's love is not fickle; it does not end. Second, God's love is unconditional. It's not based on your performance or anything you can do or fail to do. God loves you no matter what. He loves you even when you don't return His love. His love is unconditional.

FOURTH, GOD SEES YOU AS FORGIVABLE BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE. That's good news, because we are in constant need of God's forgiveness. We are constantly messing up. We are constantly getting our priorities out of order. We constantly ignore God's commands and forget to honor God with our obedience. We forget his love and fail to trust him to care for us. We seek after other gods every time we try to fill the emptiness in our heart that only God can fill. Only He can satisfy our deepest longings. The good news about grace is that God forgives us all our sins when we turn to Him in repentance. The Bible says, **"I am the God who forgives your sins"** and I do this because you deserve it. NO! That's not what it says. It says, **"I am the God who forgives your sins, and I do this because of who I am. I will not hold your sins against you."** (Isaiah 43:225)

Some of you have done things that you think God can't forgive. You think God is going to hold that sin against you as long as you live. You have other people in your life who are still holding things against you and you think God is going to do the same. Listen to what the Bible says about how God sees us: **"Through what Christ would do for us, God decided to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault we stand before Him covered with His love."** (Ephesians 1:4)

You can choose to live your life outside of God's grace. You can choose to reject what God has done for you in Christ Jesus. You can choose to be so proud that you insist on standing on your own merit before God. But let me tell you—you won't make it to heaven that way. Only Christ will enable you to stand before God, accepted, loved, valued and forgiven. He offers you that love to you because of His grace.

FIFTH, GOD SEES YOU AS CAPABLE BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE. Once the burden of sin and death is lifted from you, you are set free to be all that you were meant to be. Remember Paul in the Bible. He was trying so hard to be holy, to be acceptable to God. He actually had people put to death because they were putting their faith in Jesus Christ and Paul thought that was offensive to God. Paul didn't understand what God was doing. But when he did he discovered the power of God. He writes, *"I have strength for all things in Christ who empowers me. I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses inner strength into me, that is, I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency."* (Philippians 4:13)

When we try to live without God, we suffer from overwhelming feelings of inadequacy and low self esteem. Any time anything besides God is number one in your life, you're going to be plagued with insecurity. Inner strength and peace come from possessing something that cannot be taken away from you. If you put your faith in how much money you have, that can be taken away from you. If you put your faith in your own physical strength and mental capacity, that can and will be taken away from you. If you put your faith in your good looks, that can and will be taken away from you. There is only one thing you can put your faith in that will not be taken away from you and that is the grace of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Through that grace you are made acceptable, valuable, lovable, forgivable and capable.

The Bible says, *"Once you were less than nothing; now you are God's own."* (1st Peter 2:10) It is in becoming God's own that we find healing and hope.

Fred Craddock was vacationing in Gatlinburg, TN with his wife. They were finishing up their meal at a local restaurant when an old man came up to them and asked, "How are you doing? Are you having a good time? Are you here on vacation? Not wanting to be rude Craddock replied, "Yes, we are on vacation and yes, we are having a good time." "What do you do for a living?" the old man asked. Again, not wanting to be rude he answered, "I'm a professor of preaching." He thought for sure this would drive the guy away, but it didn't. "Oh, you're a preacher!" the old man said. "Let me tell you a preacher story." And before Craddock could object the old man had pulled up a chair and begun his story.

He said, "I was born an illegitimate child. I never knew who my father was and that was very hard for me. The boys at my school had names they called me and they made fun of me all the time. When I walked down the main street of our little town, I always felt people were staring at me and asking that terrible question, 'I wonder who the father of that little boy is.' So I spent a lot of time by myself. I didn't have any friends. One day a new preacher came to town and everybody was talking about how good he was. I had never gone to church before. But one Sunday I thought I'd go hear him preach. He was a good preacher so I kept going back. Each time I would go late and I would leave early so I wouldn't have to

talk to anyone. Then one Sunday I got so caught up in the preacher's message, I forgot to leave. Before I knew what was happening the pastor said the closing prayer and the service was over. I tried to get out of the church but people had already filled all the aisles and I couldn't get past them. Suddenly I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. When I turned around, that big tall preacher was looking down at me asking 'What's your name, boy? What family are you from? Whose son are you?' When I heard the questions I just shook. Before I could say anything, he said, 'Why, I know who your family is! I know whose son you are. There's a distinct family resemblance. You're from the family of God. You're one of the children of God.'" Then the old man said to Craddock, "You know, mister, those simple words changed my life." With that the old man got up and left. A waitress came over and asked, "Do you know who that is, sir?" Dr. Craddock said "No." The waitress said, "That's Ben Hooper, two term governor of Tennessee. And we sure love him."

God can heal the broken hearted and bind up their wounds.

"May the God of hope fill you with joy... that by the power of the Holy Spirit, your whole life and outlook may be radiant with hope." (Romans 15:13)