

Grace on Crutches!

I. Slide#1 Intro:

- A. **Pre-prayer:** It broke my heart talking to my neighbor once, how heartbroken he was that his church refused him communion because of his divorce 20 yrs earlier.
1. It reminds me of the man who was **excommunicated & forbidden entry** into his church. He cried out to God, "They won't let me in, Lord, *because I'm a sinner.*" "What are you complaining about?" said God. "**They won't let Me in either.**"
 2. **Slide#2** Often hobbling through our church doors on Sunday morning comes **grace on crutches** - sinners still unable to throw away their false supports & stand upright in the freedom of the children of God. Yet, their mere presence in the church on Sunday morning is **a flickering candle** representing a desire to maintain contact w/ God. To douse the flame is to plunge them into a world of spiritual darkness.¹
- B. I hope when you come to CM you can leave your **white hat** at home & admit you've *failed*.
1. Thus, I **don't** need to apply **spiritual cosmetics** to make myself presentable to Him.
 2. God not only **loves** me as I am, **but knows** me as I am. **Pray!**
- C. If Jesus appeared at your dining room table tonight w/knowledge of everything you are & are not, total comprehension of your life story & every skeleton hidden in your closet; **if** He had laid out your real state of your present discipleship w/the hidden agenda, the mixed motives, & the dark desires buried in your psyche, you would feel His **acceptance & forgiveness**.²
1. Read intro to *Ragamuffin Gospel*, pg.14,15.
 2. What is Christianity to you? **Is it:** Do it yourself spirituality? Is your emphasis on what you do rather than on what God is doing? Are you a self-made man/woman?
 3. You are **not** ready to accept **true biblical Christianity** until you accept your **inadequacy & insufficiency**. Until your security is shattered & your bootstraps are cut. Until you realize you cannot **add** even a single inch to your spiritual stature.
 - a) **Slide#3** Often folks approach to the Christian life is as absurd as the enthusiastic young man who had just received his **plumbers license** & was taken to see **Niagara Falls**. He studied it for a minute & then said, "I think I can fix this."³
 4. **Slide#4,5** Jesus invited **sinners & not** the *self-righteous* to is table.
 - a) Mt.9:13 says, **For I did not come to call** the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.
 - b) **Call** in Greek is *Kalein* & has the sense of **inviting an honored guest** to dinner.
 5. Morton Kelsey, **The church is not a museum for saints but a hospital for sinners.**

¹ Brennan Manning, *Ragamuffin Gospel*, pg.31.

² Ibid, pg.63.

³ Anthony De Mello, *Taking Flight: A Book of Story Meditations*.

D. Can we get honest & admit we are a bundle of *paradoxes*?

1. I believe & I doubt, I hope & I get discouraged, I love & I hate, I feel bad about feeling good, I feel guilty about not feeling guilty. I am trusting & suspicious. I am honest & I still play games. (Brennan Manning, pg.25)

E. The Good News of the gospel of grace cries out: We are all, equally, privileged **but** unentitled beggars at the door of God's mercy!

1. Jesus comes not for the *super-spiritual* but for the **wobbly** & the **weak-knee'd** who know they don't have it all together, & who are not too proud to accept the handout of amazin' grace!

F. In ch.4, Paul went all the way back to **Abraham** & **David** to explain how God justifies sinners...**now** he goes all the way back to *Adam*!

G. How would you like the title "*the sinful father of all people*"? (i.e. Adam)

1. But in *contrast* we also hear of Jesus, "*the sinless Savior of all people*".

II. Slide#6,7 **ADAM TO MOSES!** (12-14)

A. (12) **Through one man sin entered...death spread** - Like the man who on a ship went down into his birth & started **cutting a whole** into the side of the ship. When yelled at to stop he said, "*What does it matter to you? The hole I've made is under my own berth.*"

1. Adam affected **all** by cutting a whole in the side of **life's ship**, **in that**, we're all on the **same boat!**

B. **Sin entered the world...and thus death spread to all men.**

1. **Entered** = means that **sin** went in the world's front door (*by means of Adam's sin*).
2. **Spread** = literally "passed or went through" **or** "spread through." **Death** penetrated the entire human race, like a vapor permeating all of a house's rooms.
 - a) **Noah** probably understood this truth better than any. Looking out his boat at all the floating carcasses. **Or, maybe...**
 - b) **Abraham** looking at the ashes of Sodom & Gomorrah. **Or, maybe...**
 - c) **Moses** who watched the earth open up & swallow *Korah, Dathan, & Abiram*.

III. Slide#8,9 **ADAM & JESUS!** (15-19)

A. **5 parallels.** (1st 3 contrasts; last 2 comparisons)

1. (15) Adam's **trespass** **vs.** free gift of God's **grace** in Jesus.
2. (16) Adam brought **condemnation** **vs.** Jesus, **justification**.
3. (17) Adams **death** **vs.** Jesus, **life**.
4. (18) Adams **condemnation** **vs.** Jesus, **acquittal**.
5. (19) Adams **disobedience** **vs.** Jesus, **obedience**.

IV. Slide#10 SIN & GRACE! (20-21)

- A. (20a) The **Law** makes wrong doing all the worse.
1. It was never intended to provide salvation, **but** to convince people of their need for it!
 2. **A stick really looks crooked when you hold it next to a straight one.**
 3. God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were.
 - a) But where **sin** increased... **Grace** "superabounded", "surpassed by far", "exceeded immeasurably", "overflowed beyond".
 - (1) God lavished His **grace** upon us **beyond all measure!**
- B. **Slide#11,12** Remember in the game of **Monopoly** it has one card that when someone lands on **Chance**, it reads "*Return to 'Go'-collect \$200.*" - The irony of the directive is that in one respect it seems to **penalize**, **but** in another it **rewards**.
1. **Go back & start over, ...but start over again richer!**
 2. Salvation is the same, **Go back & start over, ...but start over again richer!**
 - a) **Richer in His Peace**; richer because **access** is granted; richer in love, **Grace, mercy, hope, glory.**
 3. **Slide#13,14** But I also liked these 2 "chance" cards I found (Keynote pics).
 - a) You find out you actually died 18 turns ago. Float your token above the board & make "ooo" noises for the rest of the game.
 - b) You have angered your God. This card can't help you now!
- C. (20) **Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.**
1. **Slide#15** (msg) **sin** didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition w/the aggressive forgiveness we call grace. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down.
 2. Our text might be freely translated, "**where sin reached a high-water mark, grace completely flooded the world.**"⁴ [Donald Grey Barnhouse]
 3. **Some words convey a multitude of ideas:**
 - a) Say the word **world** & the minds runs around the globe & sees continents, islands, seas, shores, mountains, valleys, cities.
 - b) Say the word **atom** & you think of Hiroshima, or electrons, protons, neutrons, & other particle all whirling in order.
 - c) But the word **grace** carries us beyond the universe **into the heart of God.**
 - (1) As the scientist use the **cyclotron** & the **betatron** to **penetrate the heart of the invisible atom** so we use the word **grace** to **penetrate the infinite heart of God**

⁴ Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans, pg.122

- (2) By no other way can a *creature* come to the **Creator**; and
By no other means can a *sinner* stand before a holy **God**.

4. Also, God never withholds *grace* because of sin.

a) **Slide#16** The fundamental idea here in our text is that *no dam erected by sin can stop the flow of God's grace*.

- (1) The great dams of the world, such as **Aswan**(Egypt), **Hoover**, **Shasta**, are used to arrest the flow of rivers or to divert the flow from their normal course. **But nothing can arrest or divert the flow of the *grace* of God.**

b) **Adam** had not gone very far from the scene of his rebellion before the grace of God **sought** him, **called** him by name, **pursued** him in the obscurity of the grove where he was hiding.

- (1) If God had struck this guilty sinner & banished him to outer darkness forever, such action would have indicated that *God worked by trial & error*, & that this was one of his larger errors. **But such was not the case!**

- (2) **Slide#17** Of course God knew what was going to happen, **yet** not responsible for his sin. He knew that it would occur, & He would use it as the **backdrop** against which to display the wonders of *grace*.

- (3) God did not withhold His grace because of Adam's sin. **Instead, He made great promises of grace.** Announcing that the Messiah would come, the Deliverer, the Seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would destroy the destroyer & bring man back into fellowship with Himself.

(a) Matter of fact, the **first blood** ever shed on this planet was shed by **God Almighty** to provide covering for the man & woman who believed His word about the *redemption* that would be provided.

- (4) **Grace was not withheld because of sin; Grace was given in spite of sin.**

D. **Slide#18** (21) Two Queens (*sin & grace* reigning) - struggle between 2 queens.

1. **Sin reigning** - Last week I stood on the **lowest place** on the planet, at the **Dead Sea**, 1,391' below sea level. You could stand upon the **highest elevation**, **Mount Everest** (in Nepal), at 29,035'. **We can both jump at the same time & try to reach the stars but neither of us will.**

a) And both of us, in our own righteousness **can't** reach the righteousness that God demands

- (1) Yet remember, this queen's reign, as it were, is **a reign in a cemetery**, & her subjects **are dead**.

b) Our God is **"A God who demands everything & stops at nothing!"** Just ask **Jesus**, He'll tell His story again **this Good Friday!**...about a God who demanded **everything & stopped at nothing...FOR YOU!**

2. **Slide#19 Grace reigning** - both queens exercise dominion; both stand face to face; each recognize as her enemy the other; there is a constant struggle between them. Not only in the **wide** field of the world **but** in the **narrow** crevices of our hearts of each of us.

a) **On the other hand we have grace & life!** - **Grace** that *superabounds, surpasses by far, exceeds immeasurably, overflows constantly*; **oh & Life** that is **Eternal!**

(1) But as LKGNT says (Linguistic Key to the Greek N.T. pg.361) **“Eternal life is not only related to the future, but is organically related to the actual life lived & is a present possession of the believer.”**

E. **Slide#20,21** I pray you wont be like the frustrated ship's captain of 2,500 tons of garbage on a barge

1. This trashes story became a **16 year odyssey**, before returning to the U.S.
2. A prolonged sanitation strike left the city of *Philadelphia* without a local landfill to dump its trash. **So in 1986 it was put on a ship and sent to sea. No other country would accept the trash - not the Bahamas, Bermuda, Honduras or the Dominican Republic. Senegal, Cape Verde, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines also banned the barge.**
3. **At one point the ship's frustrated captain dumped** most of the trash into the ocean. **All except for 4,000 tons that was re-christened as "fertilizer" and delivered to unsuspecting officials in Haiti.** After **12 years** of worldwide protests, the mountain of trash finally was shipped back to the U.S. - The federal government actually paid to have what was left on the beach in Haiti scooped up, put on another barge and taken to the state of Florida. **But Florida didn't want it either. So where did it go?** Back to *Philadelphia* in a County landfill, just about 100 miles from where it started the journey. [An article from ABC News; July 16, [A Long Haul To The Trash Dump](#)]⁵
4. **So many people carry around their garbage, their sin, for years. Not knowing where to dump it. How to get rid of it. Month after month, year after year.**
 - a) Then to find out the answer is right in their backyard, not even 100 miles away, but as far away as a whisper of **repentance**, at the invitation of **His grace**.
 - b) **Slide#22,23** Jesus says, **come dump all your garbage at the foot of my cross. Bury it here!**

F. Communion:

1. Luke 19:5-7 (Jesus to Zacchaeus) **“Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”** Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. **But the people were displeased.** **“He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.**
 - a) Every communion, many that don't understand grace, would still say the same.
 - b) Jesus invited **sinners & not** the *self-righteous* to is table.
 - c) By **grace** receive **His body**; by **grace** receive **His blood**.

⁵ <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=130230&page=1#.T3dRku2CBQU>