

Discovery Weekend Curriculum
Dance to the Music of Grace

Saturday morning chapel message

Purpose: Introduce the theme and establish the primacy of grace as the basis of our relationship with God in Christ.

Introduction (could be done as a narrated skit): from "Classic Christianity", Bob George, pp. 152-3

Imagine yourself in a large house, in which live both deaf and hearing people. You can't tell by looking who's deaf and who has hearing. Sitting in a room by himself is a man. As you watch, you notice that he's tapping his toes and snapping his fingers in time. You know what's happening. He's listening to music – obviously enjoying himself. His whole body is responding to what his ears are receiving. There's nothing strange or mysterious about it.

Now we add a new person to the scene. One of the deaf persons enters the room, sees the first man and walks over and smiles a greeting. The deaf man watches the music-lover for a few moments. "He sure seems to be enjoying himself," he thinks. "I think I'll try it."

*So the deaf man sits down and begins to imitate him. Awkwardly, haltingly, he tries to snap his fingers, tap his toes, and move like the person next to him. Everybody has some sense of rhythm, whether they can hear or not. After a little practice, the deaf man is snapping and tapping in time with the first man. He even smiles a bit and shrugs: "It's not **that** much fun" he thinks "but it's ok."*

*Let's now add our final factor to the story. A third man walks into the room. What does he see? **Two men, apparently doing the same thing.** But there is a vast difference between them:*

- *The hearing man's actions are **natural responses** to the music.*
- *But the deaf man's actions are only mechanical imitations because he can't even hear a note."*

Which of these men best represents us?

- Are we like the **deaf man** – trying hard to follow the rules that direct the motions that go with the music, but only doing so mechanically because he can't hear the music.
- Or are we like the **hearing man** – who's entire focus is on the music and his actions are an almost unconscious response to the music.

I used to be like the deaf man. But in the last few years, God gave me ears to hear the music that I had never really heard before – the music of grace. My actions, rather mechanical, though sincere, before, are now on an entirely different basis. God has taught me a joyous truth:

The Christian life is a matter of hearing & dancing to the music of grace

Here's how Paul put it:

Titus 2.11 *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.*

How are we saved? [response: by grace through faith].

But what happens to grace after we're brought to Christ?:

v12 *It [grace] teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live [to say "yes" to] self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

Not only are we saved by grace, but grace is the music that we are to live by – "dance" to. But you know what? It's hard to dance to music you can't hear. But when you hear it and fall in love with it, you can't help but dance! So you've got to hear the music and fall in love.

But where do you go to hear? It's found on the station with the call letters: "*The gospel of Jesus Christ.*" It's the good news of a *rescue* and a *relationship*: When we turn to God in repentance and faith, God frees us from bondage to death and sin and gives us an eternal relationship with himself – adopting us as his own children. This is only possible because Jesus satisfies God's just claims against us – He is our Savior. And Jesus becomes our life as our lives are in him – He is our Living Lord.

That's the gospel – that's grace – do you hear that music? Good.

Now this weekend we want to invite those who hear the music to get up and dance!

Here's how Jesus describes the dance:

John 13.34 "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*"

What's new Jesus? Doesn't the Torah (Lev 19) say "*Love your neighbor as yourself*"? The answer is in the phrase, "*as I have loved you.*"

Jesus invites us to live a life that is the joyful, submissive response to his love for us. And so we arrive at an important truth:

You will never love God or neighbor more than you feel loved by God.

You can only live according to grace to the extent you experience it yourself. Before you can dance, you must hear the music.

So it begins by accepting God's grace, in Christ, and then you can't help but dance:

2Co 5.14 "*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*"

There can't be – there *must* not be – any other motive, any other rule for living.

That's what Paul is saying to us in **Galatians 5**:

Gal 5.1 "*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm [keep on standing – keep on living], then [in this freedom], and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*"

Christians in Galatia were seduced into thinking that the Law was to be their motivation, defining their relationship with Jesus. Paul objected:

v2 "*Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised [the principle marker of participation in the Old Covenant community], Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is required to obey the whole law [Law of Moses].*"

They understood that they began their Christian lives through grace. But they thought that once the relationship was established by grace, the law was to take over as their guide for living and maintaining the relationship. They had a formula in mind: • saved=grace • living=grace+law.

But Paul insists that once you add something to grace, you're losing it:

Gal 5:4 *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

Paul urges them to return to a relationship with Christ based solely on grace.

But how, then, are they to live?:

v5 (REB) *For it is **by the Spirit and through faith** that we hope to attain that righteousness which we eagerly await.*

Living "by the Spirit," "through faith" produces true righteousness.

"But," some of them surely objected, "How can grace adequately define behavior? **What about God's law?**" Paul answers:

v6 *For in Christ Jesus [under grace, in the Spirit, by faith] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

If our motive, our rule, our source of power for living, is anything but grace, it may *look* good, *seem* right, *appear* to produce righteousness, but it doesn't – it doesn't count!

So where do you go for guidance?

"*Faith expressing itself through love*" – is the powerful guiding principle for a Christian's life. It is only through Christ, through grace – being saved by it and living according to it – that we can become and do what God desires for us.

"But," some object, "**Is faith expressing itself through love enough?**" That was the issue that Christians in Galatia struggled with. For them it wasn't enough because they didn't understand **the discipline that grace provides.**

Think of it as the difference between a city dog and a country dog.

[illustration from Classic Christianity Illustrated]

*A **city dog** has a good life, his own doghouse (maybe air-conditioned), a big back yard to run around in. Normally, he's got a full bowl of water. He gets fed a couple of times a day. He can sleep all day if he wants – no job to clock in for. He gets patted on the head and scratched behind the ears. He is well taken care of.*

But, what do you think the city dog spends most of his time trying to do? Get out! Why? The dog may have a pretty good life in the backyard, but he's not free. Because he is not free, all he wants to do is get out. His world is defined by the back yard fence and he wants out!

*Now consider the **country dog**. No fence to hold him in – he can run away to Alaska if he wants. But where do you find him? On the back porch – all day long. You can't get the dumb thing to move.*

There are no fences, but he stays on the porch. You can't chase him away. He is lying on the porch, waiting for his master to come, pet him on the head, take him somewhere in the pickup. He is resting at the feet of his master.

Trying to live with the law as our guide is like the **city dog** living within the fence. It's a good life with well-defined boundaries, but after a while all the attention is on the fence – the fence becomes the identity, and human nature being what it is, pretty soon attention is focused on how to get under, around or through the fence. Life is spent focused on the boundaries.

But living according to grace – *faith expressing itself through love* – is like living as the **country dog** – focused on the master, guided and controlled by the relationship with him. "Resting" in him. That's dancing to the music of grace! And when we do, we have a type of motivation and guidance that the law can never provide:

Gal 5.13 *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." [faith being expressed through love] 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

The guidance of grace is the guidance of the Spirit.

The dance of grace can only be danced in the Spirit. You can't dance the music of grace on your own—the Spirit must be the leading partner in the dance. Here's why:

v17 *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want [the Spirit puts the brakes on sinful desire]. 18 *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.* [you are under grace!]*

Don't we need the law to tell us what's right and wrong? Paul answers:

v19 *The acts of the sinful nature are **obvious**: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

The steps in the dance of grace exclude immorality. What's immoral? Most everyone knows. They might not live accordingly, but those who live under grace, in the Spirit, will. The Spirit will never produce evil, immoral behaviors and attitudes.

But how do we know what positive behaviors God wants? Paul answers:

v22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is [living under grace naturally produces:] love [this is the "umbrella" fruit], joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law [every law there is, including the law of Moses is for these things]. 24 *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.**

The law of Moses was never designed to do this – it simply revealed how truly sinful human nature is. But the new covenant crucifies the sinful nature because those "in Christ" are crucified with him and given a new life of freedom from the control of the sinful nature – a life where *faith can be expressed through love*.

This is the freedom to dance to the music of grace:

Gal 5:25 *Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

But what are the steps in this dance?

Ladies, when a man takes you in his arms to dance, how do you know what steps to dance? You follow him. He sets the pace, he leads in the dance, your job is to "keep in step".

Notice **v16** again:

5:16 *So I say, live by the Spirit [walk in the Spirit, dance in the Spirit], and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.*

How do we "keep in step with the Spirit"? How do we "live by the Spirit?"

This is BIG stuff and it's what Pastor Ted will lead us in discussing this afternoon.

Let's end now, thanking God that we can hear the music.

[prayer]

Saturday afternoon seminar

Purpose: to explore what it means to "keep in step with the Spirit."

Do you hear the music of grace? Are you ready to dance?

How do you know what the steps are—who is leading in this dance?

It's God the Holy Spirit. How does he lead us? That's what we want to discuss this afternoon.

First, by way of review, let's remember what Scripture establishes about the Holy Spirit:

1. The Holy Spirit is God. Scripture establishes this in three ways:

a. The Holy Spirit has the attributes of God.

- i. **Eternal** ("*Christ, through the Eternal Spirit, offered himself*" Heb. 9:14)
- ii. **Omnipresent** ("*Where can I go from your Spirit?...If I go up to the heavens, you are there, if I make my bed in the depths, you are there*" Psa. 139:7-9)
- iii. **Omniscient** ("*The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God...No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.*" 1Cor. 2:10-11)

b. The Holy Spirit is equated with God.

2Cor 13:14 "*May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and **the fellowship of the Holy Spirit** be with you all.*"

Mat 28:19 "*Baptizing...in the name [singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*"

c. The Holy Spirit does work that only God does.

- i. **Creates** (Elihu proclaims: "*The Spirit of God has made me*" Job 33:4)
- ii. **Empowers** miracles, doing the ministry of God (Jesus says: "*If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you*" Mat. 12:28)
- iii. Gives believers **new birth** ("*No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit*" John 3:5)

2. The Holy Spirit is personal.

The Spirit lives, speaks, may be blasphemed, tested, grieved, insulted.

3. The Holy Spirit is sent to minister to the church.

God the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in the life of believers today. He leads us to repentance, gives us new life. Scripture tells us that he helps, he teaches, he witnesses, he convicts, he guides. He gives us spiritual *gifts* [name some]. And we learn that the Spirit produces in us *fruit* that reflects the character of Jesus himself (love, joy, peace, etc).

In short, the Spirit is at work in the church in general, and in our lives personally—working to *glorify* Jesus, and to bring the *life* of Jesus to us and to equip and empower us to do the *work* of Jesus here on earth. These are the Spirit’s ministries—this is the dance of grace that the Spirit leads us if we’re willing.

Would you like to dance to the music of grace with the Spirit leading?

1. So let’s ask, how do we “get in the dance”?

How do we place ourselves where the Spirit can use us, minister through us?

[small group discussion time]

Issue: spiritual disciplines. Putting ourselves more fully—more fully yielded—in God’s presence.

Ephesians 5:17-18 (“be *filled* with the Spirit”)

The Spirit is not a “substance” that can be measured. The imagery here is of the Spirit that is like wind, filling sails. We are the sails and we need to place ourselves at the Spirit’s disposal—and we need to grow in our capacity [use balloon analogy].

2. When the Spirit “fills” what happens?

What evidence should we look for that would show the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives?

[Small group discussion]

Fruit is manifested; flesh is denied [issue of holiness]

Gifts are manifested, ministry is advanced.

What ministries? [Refer back to ministries of the Spirit—key issue is Jesus is glorified]

Discuss Pentecostal concept of “2nd blessing.”

3. What does the Spirit teach?

- a. Counter “prediction addiction”—He preaches Christ (“*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” [Rev 19:10])
- b. Counter misuse of gifts of prophecy.
- c. Counter a mystical “moment by moment” leading of the Spirit that is hyper-personalized and disconnected from community, planning and Scripture.
- d. Pro: discipleship.

4. How does the Spirit lead?

- a. Counter hyper-individualism, hyper-spiritualism and hyper-emotionalism. The Spirit leads in and through community. Discuss how John Wesley experienced the two “ditches” of ignoring the Spirit and then an individualistic approach where the “spirit” people following was simply their inner voice and that led to all sorts of problems.
 - b. Pro: “take up your cross” selflessness, and joyful, Spirit-filled whole-life worship.
 - c. Spiritual gifts are only “spiritual” as they are used to edify the body (to break fellowship to have a better place to use your gifts is contrary to how the gifts are given).
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Sunday morning sermon

Purpose: to challenge the audience to go deeper with God in response to grace.

This weekend we are discussing dancing to the music of God’s grace. And we’ve seen that grace is the music of God’s salvation—and he sends the Spirit who leads us in the dance.

Thank God for his grace in Jesus! The apostle Peter certainly did:

2PET 1:1 *Simon Peter, a servant [doulos: bond slave] and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a **faith** as precious as ours: 2 **Grace** and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 His divine **power** has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these [faith, grace and power] he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

Do we grasp what Peter is saying? By God's grace – his mercy – we have been given precious, powerful, glorious gifts and promises. We are forgiven! And not only that, we are invited into an intimate relationship with God wherein we can partake of his very nature! Thank God for his indescribable grace!

v5 *For this very reason [because of all we have been given, because of God's grace and our deep appreciation for it], make every effort to add to your faith....*

And Peter goes on to list the works – we might say the "outworking" of the gifts we have been given. Here Peter illustrates one of the great messages – yet it's one of the great paradoxes of God's way—the : interrelationship of grace, faith and works. They are like three themes in one piece of music—perfectly harmonizing and intertwining.

Here in 2PET we learn three things about this interrelationship:

1. **Grace is what happens to me.** Grace is the greatest power in the universe and the greatest act of God's grace was performed in the death of Jesus on the cross for you and me. I didn't do anything to earn that – it was done for me. Grace is what God gives to me – unearned, unmerited.

Let's pause right here and go to the table of the Lord to remember what Jesus has done for us and to celebrate and give thanks.

[communion]

[following communion, the sermon continues]

So Peter tells us about grace—and it's what happens to me—a free gift, accomplished entirely by Jesus on my behalf.

Then Peter tells us about faith:

2. Faith is letting it happen to me. Faith is the door – the channel by which I accept God's grace – his undeserved gifts. It is impossible to receive God's gifts without faith:

HEB 11.6 *Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

One author wrote of the relationship between faith and grace:

Faith is the wire that connects us to grace, over which grace comes streaming from God.

By faith we come to God, opening the door for us to receive all the gifts of His grace – first and foremost the sacrifice of Jesus.

But Peter goes on to talk about works:

3. Work is letting it happen through me.

Because we have received grace through faith, we respond with works.

It is this **responsiveness to God's grace**, received in faith, that Peter goes on to discuss.

Because we have been given free entrance to the dance—and in faith stepped up to dance, we are now invited to get in and boogie! What does it look like when we do?

2PET 1:5 *For this very reason, [what reason? by reason of the grace we have received] make every effort to add to your faith...*

It might best be translated as in the Amplified "*exercise your faith to develop...*"

Faith, like grace is a gift of God and Peter says that faith must be exercised, it must be put to use.

Notice similar words from Paul:

PHI 2:12-13 *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to **work out your salvation** with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

We must put the salvation, the grace we have been given, to work.

That is what a Christian is: the outworking of the grace of God. Notice what Peter says:

2PET 1:8 NEB *These are gifts which, if you possess and foster them, will keep you from being either useless or barren in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So these are important and vital. That's why Peter says:

2PET 1.5 *make every effort* [NKJV give all diligence] *to add...*

Diligence in Greek (spoude) means to make haste, to be eager, earnest and careful. It means to do your best, to exert yourself. In other words, it means INTENSE EFFORT!

Is this effort for earning salvation? No, it's our response to what God has given. It begins with faith, and now God says *"exercise that faith, exercise my nature in you, put the grace, the salvation I have given to you to work. If you do, you will be productive, growing, useful to me."*

So let's hear what Peter says we are to add to the grace and faith we have been given:

1. add GOODNESS

This goodness (virtue in the NKJ) is excellence of achievement or mastery – in this case moral excellence or moral character and it implies the idea of courage and energy. It has to do with energetically, and resolutely, doing the right things. Faith without works, as James said, is dead – it is no faith at all. The nature of God in us works – it must be expressed, it must take action! So let it!

And remember it's not a matter of reaching perfection all at once: it's a matter of practice – mastering patterns of obedience, of goodness. And God says do it energetically and courageously!

2. add KNOWLEDGE

One thing of note here is that these qualities of God are added somewhat cumulatively: one leads to another. If you do right things (goodness) you will begin to understand God's way more and that will tell you more about God's will. We learn God's will by doing: faith leads to works.

And, of course, to add knowledge means to study to gain it. This is how we, *"Grow in grace & knowledge"* (2 Pet 3:18).

God has given us a mind and we are to use it:

[story] A man was teaching a second-grade class. A little girl came up to his desk and explained: *"Teacher, I have been reading a lot of words lately. I am able to think about things. I can think about one thing, another thing, and hundreds of things I am a thinking machine!"*

God gave us a mind, and Jesus tells us to "love the Lord your God...with all your mind."

3. add SELF-CONTROL

The word was used in Greek of those who master their desires and passions. Does this refer to great human, iron will? No this self-control comes through God the Holy Spirit working in us – indeed it is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal 5:23), and so you might say it is the **control of the spirit over the self**.

Notice how Paul describes it:

RO 8: 12 *Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.*

The word for "led" here is not passive, it means to be led by being taken hold of.

4. add PERSEVERANCE

This adds the element of time to the equation. We continue to grow in knowledge, we continue to come under the control of the Spirit and we don't stop, we persevere – we "keep on keeping on."

Christianity is a marathon not a sprint!

The Greek word for perseverance (*hupomone*) literally means to "remain under." In a world that is bent on escapism, a Christian does not seek to escape doing the hard things – they don't hide from trials, and difficulties: they take them head on. This is courageous perseverance in the face of difficulty, trial, discouragement. Paul was this way:

PHI 3:12 *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, 14 I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. 15 All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you.*

Here was Paul, in prison. A Christian for nearly 30 years. And God was granting him new opportunities for growth. He might have despaired, "I should be further along than this; I shouldn't need this kind of trial at this time to grow!"

But he did not despair, he did not become discouraged (at least not for long), he persevered.

President Calvin Coolidge once said about perseverance:

*Press on: Nothing in the world can take the place of perseverance. **Talent** will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. **Genius** will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. **Education** will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.*

Persistence and determination alone is omnipotent.

A Christian is not a "flash in the pan." She is persistent—he perseveres. We are called to work and to do the work of God takes perseverance.

I'm reminded a poster you see from time to time: **Six Phases of a Project:**

1. *Enthusiasm*
2. *Disillusionment*
3. *Panic*
4. *Search for the Guilty*
5. *Punishment of the Innocent*
6. *Praise and Honors for the Non Participants*

To persevere means to maintain enthusiasm. That's one of the reason God brings us together like this—to stir each other up, to encourage one another. Let's hang in there together. Let's dance the music of grace in the Spirit and let's do it together no matter what!

5. add GODLINESS

"Godliness" is from the Greek "*eusebeia*" from "*eu*" = "well" and "*sebomai*" = "to worship." The idea is "worship rightly directed." This speaks of devotion to God. It means to be continuously aware of God directing and leading us and that, of course, has a profound effect on how we think and what we do.

6. add BROTHERLY AFFECTION

The Greek word is *philadelphia*. This is affection and warmth between brethren. As we become more aware of God's presence in our lives, we will exhibit that out to others:

1JO 4:9 *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*

7. add LOVE

The greek is *agape* = Godly love. This is the culmination of the expression of God's grace, of faith, of God's divine nature in us – the very love of God, who is love.

JOH 3:16 *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

This is self-sacrificial, actions of love. To love is to give up oneself. And God says that's what he is and what we are becoming as he lives in us.

CONCLUSION:

So the faith we are given activates the grace of God in our lives by which we partake of God's nature and that necessarily leads to that grace, that faith, that nature being exercised, being expressed as we add: ***goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.***

Peter continues:

2PET 1:8 *For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is short-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more **eager** to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*