

“Living by the Basics”—1 Corinthians 1:3-5

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Living by the Basics”, is 1 Corinthians 1:3-5 → *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, that in every way you were enriched in Him.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

In 1986 Robert Fulghum published a book entitled, “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten.” In it Fulghum lists lessons normally learned in American kindergarten classrooms and explains how the world would be improved if adults adhered to the same basic rules such as sharing everything, playing fair, not hitting people, putting things back where you found them, cleaning up your own mess, not taking things that don’t belong to you, saying you’re sorry when you hurt somebody, washing your hands before you eat, and . . . of course, flushing. It is a call for adults on all levels of relationship to live by simple basic principles to make our world a better place.

Oh, if life could be so simple! It is the nature of maturity with the acquiring of more knowledge and responsibilities to make life more complicated. However, this is not all bad either. Everyday we enjoy the

benefits and comforts produced by a deeper knowledge of life and our world flowing out of many complicated fields of study and work. At the same time, as people work together they still look for others to practice common sense and common courtesy with actions learned in kindergarten or from their parents at home. Ever seen the sign in your work place?—“Clean up your own mess. You mother doesn’t work here!”

Living by the basics is vitally important for living as Christ’s Church. The apostle Paul saw the life of a Christian as a constant connection to the “basics” as expressed in verse 3 of our text: *The grace . . . and peace which is experienced only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* He even began this letter to the Christians in Corinth by thanking God for His *grace . . . that was given them in Christ Jesus.* (Verse 4)

Grace is God’s **undeserved favor** which He displays toward us sinners in the Person & Work of Jesus. This is the only basis for a relationship of forgiveness before God and must permeate every area of your life. In 1 Timothy 1:15 Paul says: *The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,* and then went on to describe himself as *the foremost of sinners.* Not deserving to be a Christian, Paul recognized this basic relationship of undeserved mercy and love so intensely that every one of his letters in the New Testament begins with *grace . . . to you from God our Father.*

Peace is the fruit of this relationship with God by grace. It refers to how we can continue to live in a relationship with Him as our loving Father, not in rebellion and disobedience to His will. Colossians 1:21-23 says: *You, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, **He has now reconciled** in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard.* It is a peace which only God can give you through faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. It is also a peace which will govern your relationships with others as you strive to *live peaceably with all people* (cf. Romans 12:18).

It is very fitting that Paul should begin with these “basics” considering the report he had heard about how these Corinthian Christians were living for and serving Christ. They were quarreling with each other, causing divisions amongst themselves by esteeming one servant of Jesus over others (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:11-12). They allowed sexual immorality to be openly practiced amongst them (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:1ff.). They were taking each other to court, bringing law suits against each other in front of unbelievers, causing offense to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:1-6). They were getting drunk while celebrating the Lord’s Supper and taking it to their judgment as they sinned against the body and blood of Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 10-11). They practiced self-centered

indulgence without concern for the faith of others (cf. 1 Corinthians 8;10:23-24). These are only a few of their struggles as they strived to perform Christ's ministry as a congregation in that place.

These Christians did not have problems because they lacked the Lord's blessings. On the contrary, verse 5 of our text says *that in every way they were enriched in Him **in all speech and all knowledge** . . . not lacking in any gift* (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:7). Their struggles were a result of losing track of living by the basics of grace and peace **in Jesus Christ**. Maturity and the acquiring of more knowledge and experience in life, while beneficial in many respects, pose their own challenges to relationships with God and others. The devil can use even your strengths as a foothold to cause division, create contempt and draw into quarrels, even with your strong commitment to Jesus Christ.

Maturity and the acquiring of more knowledge and experience in life can work against Christ if not kept in check by **His** grace and peace. That's why Paul will tell these Corinthian Christians later in his letter that *knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God* (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1-3). Satan is constantly striving to keep us away from the basics of grace and peace because He knows it keeps us focused on Jesus. He preys on your sinful pride and arrogance, tempting you to depend upon your own

knowledge, skills, abilities and powers. It is expressed in your relationships where you are always right because you know best.

Keeping the basics of grace constantly before you keeps your actions functioning according to being *known by God*, not according to your own experiences, knowledge, abilities or powers. And how are you known by God? As a sinner who constantly experiences *grace . . . and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*. To experience such *grace . . . and peace* can only happen as you live humbly in repentance and faith in *God our Father and **the Lord Jesus Christ*** Who gave His life for the forgiveness of your sins.

Living by the basics is a challenge throughout our lives. Apparently even Robert Fulghum experienced this challenge. I thought it interesting that he published a 15th anniversary edition of his book with the subtitle: "Reconsidered, Revised & Expanded, with Twenty-five New Essays." Apparently even Kindergarten is getting more complicated too. However, when it comes to the basics of God's *grace . . . and peace* it becomes doubly challenging because the devil, the world and our own sinful natures work together to turn God's *grace . . . and peace* into relationship sabotage and turmoil, especially in the Christian congregation.

Living by the basics of God's *grace . . . and peace from . . . the Lord Jesus Christ* enables us to stand firm against the devil's attempts to destroy our faith, our fellowship and God's using us to serve Him in

spreading that grace in Christ through our daily vocations of life. Jesus took on the complicated work of living perfectly under God's law **for you**. He took on your struggle with satan with all it's pain and eternal agony. As 1 John 3:8 says: *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* In this *grace . . . peace* and victory we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue carrying on God's ministry of grace as we are *enriched . . . in every way* to serve Him! Amen.

*Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration,
comfort one another, agree with one another,
live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*

(2 Corinthians 13:11)

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