

The Unshakeable Foundation of Grace

1. There's something powerful about remembering your first job. Maybe it was flipping burgers, mowing lawns, or working retail. For many of us, those early work experiences taught us lessons that went far beyond the paycheck. Sometimes those lessons came through correction. Other times, they came through something far more transformative: grace.
2. Picture this: a middle schooler working on a ranch, tasked with painting miles of galvanized pipe fencing with barn-red, oil-based paint. The job is tedious, the Texas sun is hot, and disaster strikes when the head cowboy's prized horse escapes into the freshly painted pasture. By the time the young worker realizes what's happening, the horse looks like it belongs in a circus rather than working cattle.
3. Panic sets in. The mess gets worse with every attempt to clean it up. This is the moment where punishment seems inevitable, where consequences should fall heavy. But instead, the ranch owner walks in, assesses the situation, and without a word of condemnation, shows the young worker how to properly clean up the mess.
4. That moment captures something profound about grace. It's not just the absence of punishment. It's the presence of patient instruction, of someone who sees your failure and chooses to walk alongside you through it rather than simply correcting you from a distance.

When Grace Becomes a Checklist

5. This is the story of the Galatian church, and if we're honest, it's often our story too. These were blue-collar believers who encountered Jesus and experienced grace before they ever experienced religious rules. They heard the gospel, met Jesus, and said yes. Simple. Beautiful. Transformative.
6. But then something shifted. After the initial planting of these churches, other teachers arrived with a different message. Grace, which had been the foundation of everything, quietly transformed into a checklist. The freedom they had experienced began to feel more like obligation. The relationship started to feel more like religion.
7. Sound familiar? Many of us have a similar trajectory. There's that powerful moment when we first encounter Jesus—when grace rushes in and changes everything. But as time passes, we subtly shift from relying on that grace to relying on our own effort. We start thinking that while grace may have saved us, it's now up to us to finish the work. We replace the wonder of relationship with the mechanics of churchianity: showing up on Sundays, attending classes, checking spiritual boxes.
8. Here's the revolutionary truth: grace doesn't just save you, it sustains you.

The Unchanging Promise

9. To counter this drift toward performance-based faith, Paul takes the Galatian believers back in time—way back, before Moses, before the Ten Commandments, before any religious structure existed. He points them to Abraham and God's promise.

10. In Galatians 3:16-17, Paul makes a crucial argument: God made a promise to Abraham and to his "seed" (singular, pointing to Christ). This promise came 430 years before the law was given. The law didn't replace that promise, didn't improve it, and didn't cancel it. Instead, the promise finds its fulfillment in Christ.
11. This matters more than we might initially realize. Throughout Scripture, we see God's unwavering commitment to His promises. Psalm 105 declares that He remembers His covenant forever, the word He commanded for a thousand generations. God doesn't forget. He doesn't revoke. He doesn't replace.
12. Yet there's a theological error that has crept into some teaching called replacement theology—the idea that God has finished with Israel and that the church has replaced them in His plan. This view suggests that God essentially traded one people for another, that He looked at Israel and said, "You had your shot, now I'm starting over."
13. But this fundamentally misunderstands the nature of God's faithfulness. In Romans 11:1, Paul asks directly: "Has God rejected his people?" His answer is emphatic: "By no means!" Later in Romans 11:29, he declares that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."

Grafted In, Not Swapped Out

14. The truth is far more beautiful than replacement. Gentile believers weren't replacements for Jewish believers. We were grafted in. Romans 11:17-18 uses the image of wild olive branches being grafted into a cultivated olive tree. We don't replace the root—we're supported by it.

15. This distinction matters profoundly because it reveals the kind of God we serve. Do we believe in a God who swaps people out when they fail? Or a God who keeps showing up with mercy in the middle of our mess?
16. If God can discard His first covenant people, what confidence do we have that He won't discard us when we struggle? If His faithfulness depends on our performance, then it's no longer grace—it's conditional love dressed up in religious language.
17. But Scripture paints a different picture. God doesn't replace broken people. He redeems them. And thank God for that, because every single one of us has given Him reason to move on from us at some point.

The Law: Guardrails, Not the Destination

18. So where does the law fit into all of this? Paul addresses this directly in Galatians 3:19-22. The law was added because of our transgressions. It exposed sin, restrained chaos, and pointed people forward. But it was never meant to provide complete salvation.
19. Hebrews 10:1 describes the law as "a shadow of good things to come, not the realities themselves." The law shows us the problem, but it cannot fix the problem. It's like guardrails on a dangerous mountain road—essential for safety, but not the destination itself.
20. When churches mistake rules for righteousness, we lose the gospel. We lose the grace that Jesus came to earth to give us. We create systems where people are checking boxes rather than experiencing transformation.

The Personal Relationship That Changes Everything

21. Here's where it gets deeply personal. You will never grow in sanctification or your relationship with Christ if you don't develop a personal relationship with Him and become obedient to listening to His Holy Spirit. Conviction is never comfortable, but getting comfortable with allowing the Spirit to bring conviction is what helps us mature in our faith.

22. Think about it this way: correction from a stranger feels like an attack. Correction from someone who loves you feels like an investment. The difference isn't the message—it's the relationship.

23. How easily we forget what God saved us from. How quickly we lose sight of the grace that started this whole journey. There was a moment when you looked in the mirror and didn't like what you saw. But God looked at you in your worst moment and said, "This is the moment I came for."

24. Yet we get caught up in schedules, busyness, weekend attendance, and book reading, thinking that effort will grow our faith. While God's word never returns void, we were never meant to carry the weight and burden of perfecting our faith. That's why Jesus came and why He left us the Holy Spirit.

25. Philippians 1:6 promises that "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." He started it. He'll finish it. Our role isn't to manufacture transformation through sheer willpower—it's to remain connected to the vine, to stay rooted in relationship, to allow the Spirit to do His transforming work.

Living in the Freedom of Grace

26. The law and God's word and the Holy Spirit were meant to steady you while Jesus transforms you. When grace stays the foundation, when the Spirit leads the way, and when obedience becomes a response instead of a requirement, people actually grow. Chains actually fall off. Freedom becomes real.

27. And Jesus looks beautiful to the world again.

28. So perhaps today isn't about trying harder or adding more spiritual rules to your life. Maybe today is simply about coming back to grace. Coming back to His word in full context. Allowing the Holy Spirit to guide you, even when it's uncomfortable.

29. Because grace started this story, and grace is going to finish it.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Cited or Referenced:

1. **Galatians 3:7** - "The real children of Abraham then are those who put their faith in God"
2. **Galatians 3:16** - "The promises are spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say, and to seeds, meaning many people, but and to your seed, meaning one person who is Christ"
3. **Galatians 3:17** - "The law introduced 430 years later does not set aside the covenant previously established by God"
4. **Galatians 3:18** - "For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise"
5. **Galatians 3:19** - "Why then the law? It was added because of our transgressions until the offspring should come"
6. **Galatians 3:21** - "Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not"
7. **Galatians 3:22** - "The scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promises by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe"

8. **Psalm 105** - "He remembers his covenant forever the word that he commanded for a thousand generations"
9. **Romans 11:1** - "I ask then, has God rejected his people by no means?"
10. **Romans 11:29** - "The gifts and the callings of God are irrevocable"
11. **Romans 11:18** - "Do not be arrogant towards the branches. You do not support the root. The root supports you"
12. **Jeremiah 31:37** - "Only if the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out will I reject all of the offspring of Israel"
13. **Ephesians 2:15** - Reference to "one new humanity"
14. **Ephesians 2** (general reference) - "As the Gentiles, we weren't separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. But now we have been brought near by the blood of Christ"
15. **Hebrews 10:1** - "The law is a shadow of good things to come, not the realities themselves"
16. **Philippians 1:6** - "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"

Additional Relevant Verses for Main Themes:

On Grace:

- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Titus 3:5-7
- Romans 5:8

On God's Faithfulness to His Promises:

- 2 Timothy 2:13
- Numbers 23:19
- Hebrews 6:17-18

On the Purpose of the Law:

- Romans 3:20
- Galatians 3:24-25
- Romans 7:7

On Being Grafted In:

- Romans 11:17-24

On the Holy Spirit's Role:

- John 16:13
- Romans 8:26-27
- Galatians 5:16-25