

Hearts Full of Grace

Thomas Robinson, "Lost in Praise 3," August 29, 2010

Colossians 1:11-20

¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation.

¹⁶ For by him all things were created,
in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions
or rulers or authorities--
all things were created
through him and for him.

¹⁷ And he is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.

¹⁸ And he is the head
of the body, the church.

He is the beginning,
the firstborn from the dead,
that in everything
he might be preeminent.

¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God
was pleased to dwell,

²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself
all things, whether on earth or in heaven,
making peace by the blood of his cross.

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not count equality with God
a thing to be exploited,

⁷ but made himself nothing,
taking the form of a servant,
being born in the likeness of men.

⁸ And being found in human form,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father."

Colossians 3:16

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, instructing and counseling one another in all wisdom through Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, singing with grace (*charis*) in your hearts to God.

1 Corinthians 14:15, 26

¹⁵ So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. ...

²⁶ What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

Remaking People in a Community of Grace

The early Christians did not have to start from scratch. They were not a new religion but a continuation of the work of God described in the Hebrew Bible. Different? Yes.

Not a nation but a new humanity created by God's grace through faith from all nations. Still worshiping the same God. They had tremendous resources of worship in Scripture.

But they had a great challenge. An unimagined grace of God breaking in in Jesus Messiah.

Pagan hearts/Jewish hearts to reshape; lives to teach and train. We watch the process in the NT. God has done the work. God gives us the free gift of Grace. We receive the gift by opening our hearts/minds (faith) to its reality and power (the Holy Spirit).

Poetry and music (like the Psalms and Prophets of Israel) played a major role. In their developing patterns of worship, individuals brought (wrote?) hymns for the assembly. Spirit-inspired prophecy took the form of song. In Paul's letters he used hymns that he or others had written to express the new story, the Grace of God in Jesus Messiah. Col 1:15-20 and Phil 2:6-11 are two of several of the new Psalms/Songs of faith.

Grace from the Outside In

Both tell what God has done independent of us. We receive and respond. Col. 1 begins from the man Jesus who was born, lived, and died but sees his identity reaching back to creation and and forward beyond death to ultimate reconciliation. His cross is central.

The universe and its meaning are re-visioned through Jesus-embodiment of God's purpose.

Phil. 2 sees a new "mind" embodied in the story of Jesus - a way of thinking, core values.

A sharp edge against the self-promotion of Paul's day or ours. Founded in events, what Jesus did. The events of Jesus life seen in the great story of God's grace and salvation. Jesus defines the meaning of God's identity and glory by his self-giving humility/death.

These are hymns of profound theology and vision that reshape the mind, imagination, heart.

They remake our minds and actions by wooing us with wonder toward God's grace.

Sheer Wonder that Makes Worship Possible

We sing a great variety of songs in worship, varying in style and content. But this process of grace is at the heart of what makes the poetry we sing an instrument of God's work.

In our music we continue that sense of utter amazement before who God is and what God has done. We recognize ourselves within the transcendent reality of God and that sense of wonder flows out in worship - expressing the "worth-ship" of God. The most contemporary praise songs are united to the earliest expressions of our worship.

The Gratitude and Action that Grace Empowers

Grace is the heart of gratitude. We know who we are in God and have a reservoir in the Spirit for dealing with the sufferings, joys, failures, and successes of our lives.

The Spirit works to fill us and to overflow in lives that embody the mind of Jesus Messiah.