

The Most Transformational Word by Paul Tripp

You are always preaching some kind of gospel to yourself. Every day you preach to yourself a gospel of your loneliness, inability, and lack of resources or you faithfully preach to yourself the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel you preach to yourself will have an enormous effect on what you desire, think, say, and do in your ministry.

If your ministry is to be all that God has ordained for it to be, you must live and minister out of a sure grasp of your identity as a child of God's freely given and personally transforming grace. That grace must stay fresh and exciting to you. It must be personally celebrated. It must never be allowed to be distant, technical, and merely academic. Grace must not only be something you consider theologically, it must also be something you live practically. In nurturing your own soul for ministry, you must considering and reconsider again and again the nature of the grace you have been given.

Unilateral and Radical

Grace is the most transformational word in Scripture. The entire Bible is a narrative of God's grace, a story of undeserved redemption. By the transformational power of his grace, God unilaterally reaches into the muck of this fallen world, through the presence of his Son, and radically transforms his children from what we are (sinners) into what we are becoming by his power (Christ-like). The famous John Newton hymn uses the best word possible for that grace: *amazing*.

So grace is a story, and grace is a gift. It is God's character, and it is your hope. Grace is a transforming tool and a state of relationship. Grace is a theology and an invitation. Grace is an experience and a calling. Grace will turn your life upside down while giving you a rest you have never known. Grace will convince you of your unworthiness without ever making you feel unloved.

Grace will make you acknowledge that you cannot earn God's favor, and it will remove your fear of not measuring up to his standards. Grace will confront you with the fact that you are much less than you thought you were, even as it assures you that you can be far more than you had ever imagined. Grace will put you in your place without ever putting you down.

Grace will enable you to face truths about yourself that you have hesitated to consider, while freeing you from being self-consciously introspective. Grace will confront you with profound weaknesses, and at the same time introduce you to new-found strength. Grace will tell you what you aren't, while welcoming you to what you can now be. Grace will make you as uncomfortable as you have ever been, while offering you more comfort than you have ever known. Grace will drive you to the end of yourself, while it invites you to fresh starts and new beginnings. Grace will dash your hopes but never leave you hopeless. Grace will decimate your kingdom as it introduces you to a better King. Grace will expose your blindness as it gives you eyes to see. Grace will make you sadder than you have ever been, while it gives you greater cause for celebration than you have ever known.

Grace enters your life in a moment and will occupy you for eternity. You simply cannot live a productive life or have a productive ministry in this broken-down world unless you have a practical grasp of the grace you have been given.

So faithfully preach the gospel of grace to the people under your care, but start by preaching it daily to yourself, for the sake of your own soul and the ministry to which God has called you.

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