

**February 9, 2020**

# The Surprising Secret of Church Growth

*Free Grace Presbyterian Church*

## SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

In his will is our peace.

Dante

14<sup>th</sup> century Italian poet

If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.

C.S. Lewis

20<sup>th</sup> century British apologist, professor, literary critic, and author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*

Finally,  
be strong in  
the Lord and in  
the strength of his  
might.

**Ephesians 6:10**

The  
fear of the  
LORD is the  
beginning of wisdom;  
all those who practice it  
have a good  
understanding. His  
praise endures  
forever!

**Psalms 111:10**

What notes are to a musician, and what the alphabet is to a reader, and what numerals are to a mathematician, the fear of the Lord is to a wise man.

Bruce Waltke

OT scholar

B u t  
the Helper, the Holy  
Spirit, whom the Father will  
send in my name, he will teach  
you all things and bring to your  
remembrance all that I have said to  
you. Peace I leave with you; my peace  
I give to you. Not as the world gives  
do I give to you. Let not your  
hearts be troubled, neither let  
them be afraid.

**John 14:26–27**

N o t  
that I am speaking of  
being in need, for I have  
learned in whatever situation I am  
to be content. I know how to be  
brought low, and I know how to  
abound. In any and every circumstance, I  
have learned the secret of facing  
plenty and hunger, abundance and  
need. I can do all things through  
him who strengthens me.

**Philippians 4:11–13**

True conversion always issues in church membership. It is not only that converts must join the Christian community, but that the Christian community must welcome converts, especially those from a different religious, ethnic or social background. There is an urgent need for modern Ananiases and Barnabases who overcome their scruples and hesitations, and take the initiative to befriend newcomers.

John Stott

British Reformed Anglican pastor and theologian

# GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

**People: It is he who remembered us in our low estate, for his steadfast love endures forever;**

Leader: And rescued us from our foes, for his steadfast love endures forever;

**People: He who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever.**

Leader: Give thanks to the God of heaven, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 136

**We give thanks for his love endures forever**

"O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus!"

1. O the deep, deep love of Je - sus!  
 2. O the deep, deep love of Je - sus!  
 3. O the deep, deep love of Je - sus!

5  
 Vast, un - mea - sured, bound - less free;  
 Spread his - shore praise to shore;  
 Love of ev - 'ry love the best:

9  
 roll - ing as a might - y o - cean  
 how he lov - eth, ev - er lov - eth,  
 'tis an o - cean vast of bless - ing,

13  
 in its full - ness o - ver me.  
 chang - eth nev - er, nev - er - more.  
 'tis a ha - ven sweet of rest.

17  
 Un - der - neath me, all a - round me,  
 How he watch - es o'er his loved ones,  
 O the deep, deep love of Je - sus!

21  
 is the cur - rent of thy love;  
 died to call them of all his own;  
 'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me;

25  
 lead - ing on - ward, lead - ing home - ward,  
 how for them he in - ter - ced - eth,  
 and for it lifts me up to glo - ry,

29  
 to thy glo - rious rest a - bove.  
 watch - eth o'er them from the throne.  
 for it lifts me up to thee.

When the church gathers for corporate worship, we do not call God to come to be with us. Rather, we gather because God summons us to come to him so that he can remind us of his greatness and his steadfast love for us in Jesus Christ.

"Father, Long before Creation"

1. Fa - ther, long be - fore cre - a - tion thou hast cho - sen us in love; —  
 2. Though the world may change its fash - ion, yet our God is e'er the same; —  
 3. God's com - pas - sion is my sto - ry, is my boast - ing all the day; —  
 4. Lov - ing Fa - ther, now be - fore thee we will ev - er praise thy love; —

5  
 and that love so deep, so mov - ing, —  
 his com - pas - sion and his cov - nant —  
 mer - cy free and nev - er fail - ing —  
 and our songs will sound un - ceas - ing —

7  
 draws us close to Christ a - bove. — Still it keeps us, —  
 through all a - ges will re - main. — God's own chil - dren, —  
 moves my will, di - rects my way. — God so loved us, —  
 'til we reach our home a - bove. — Giv - ing glo - ry, —

10  
 still it keeps us firm - ly fixed in Christ a - lone. —  
 God's own chil - dren must for - ev - er praise his name. —  
 God so loved us that his on - ly Son he gave. —  
 giv - ing glo - ry to our God and to the Lamb; —

13  
 Giv - ing glo - ry, giv - ing glo - ry — to our God and to the Lamb. —

In love he  
 predestined us for  
 adoption to  
 himself as sons  
 through Jesus  
 Christ, according  
 to the purpose of  
 his will, to the  
 praise of his  
 glorious grace,  
 with which he has  
 blessed us in the  
 Beloved.  
 Ephesians 1

# GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

## God declares our sin and what it has earned

Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 5 & 6

## We confess our sin and hide in the spiritual Rock cleft for us

"Rock of Ages"

*Unison* Bm<sup>7</sup> A

1. Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my -  
 2. Not the la - bors of my hands can ful - fil thy  
 3. Noth - ing in my hand I bring, sim - ply to thy  
 4. While I draw this fleet - ing breath, when mine eye - lids

D Bm C#m<sup>7</sup> F#m Bm<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> C#m<sup>7</sup> F#m

self in thee; let the wa - ter and the blood, from thy riv - en  
 law's de-mands; could my zeal no res - pite know, could my tears for -  
 cross I cling; na - ked, come to thee for dress; help - less, look to  
 close in death, when I soar to worlds un-known, see thee on thy

Bm<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> C#m<sup>7</sup> F#m Bm A D C#m<sup>7</sup> F#m

side which flowed, be of sin the dou - ble cure, cleanse me from its  
 ev - er flow, all for sin could not a - tone; thou must save, and  
 thee for grace; foul, I to the Foun - tain fly; wash me, Sav - ior,  
 judg - ment throne, Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my -

Bm<sup>7</sup> D/E E<sup>7</sup> A E D/E A *Fine*

guilt and pow'r.  
 thou a - lone.  
 or I die.  
 self in thee.

All ate the same  
 spiritual food, and  
 all drank the same  
 spiritual drink. For  
 they drank from  
 the spiritual Rock  
 that followed  
 them, and the  
 Rock was Christ.

1 Corinthians 10

**God proclaims he gives us his mercy, not because we deserve it, but as a gift**

God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

**We rejoice in the richness of his mercy, his great love with which he loved us**

“Thy Mercy, My God”

1. Thy mer - cy, my God, is the theme of my song, the  
 2. With - out thy sweet mer - cy I could not live here;  
 3. Thy mer - cy is more than a match for my heart, which  
 4. Great Fath - er of mer - cies, thy good - ness I own, and the

3  
 joy of my heart, and the boast of my tongue; thy  
 sin would re - duce me to hard - ness de - pair; but  
 cov - e - nant love of thy cru - ci - fied Son; dis -

5  
 free grace a - lone from the first to the last hath  
 through thy free good - ness my spir - its re - vive and  
 solved by thy good - ness, I fall to the ground and  
 praise to the Spi - rit, whose whis - per di - vine seals

7  
 won my af - fec - tions and bound my soul  
 he that first made me still keeps me a -  
 weep for the praise of the mer - cy I've  
 mer - cy and par - don and right - eous - ness

9  
 1, 2, 3 4  
 fast.  
 live.  
 found. mine; all praise to the Spi - rit, whose

15  
 whis - per di - vine seals mer - cy and par - don and right - eous - ness mine!

I will sing of the  
 steadfast love  
 [mercy] of the  
 LORD, forever;  
 with my mouth I  
 will make known  
 your faithfulness to  
 all generations.  
 Psalm 89

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## GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

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For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. <sup>20</sup>And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." <sup>21</sup>And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?" <sup>22</sup>But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Acts 9:19b-31

<sup>23</sup>When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, <sup>24</sup>but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, <sup>25</sup>but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

<sup>26</sup>And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup>But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. <sup>28</sup>So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. <sup>29</sup>And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. <sup>30</sup>And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.

<sup>31</sup>So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

In Matthew 4 Jesus quotes Scripture saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." So we come to the word of God each week, finding in it the nourishment that feeds our souls.

**Sermon**

Rev. Per Almquist

## **The Surprising Secret of Church Growth**

The Church that God Built

Preaching that is true to Scripture converts, convicts, and conforms the spirits of men and women because it presents God's word, not because preachers have any transforming power in themselves.



# We rest in the joy of Jesus Christ and grow as a Church as we find true peace

"Jesus, I am Resting, Resting"



1. Je - sus, I am rest - ing, rest - ting, in the joy of what thou art;  
 2. O, how great thy lov - ing kind - ness: vast - er, broad - er than the sea!  
 3. Sim - ply trust - ing thee, Lord Je - sus, I be - hold thee as thou art,  
 4. Ev - er lift thy face up - on me, as I work and wait for thee;



I am find - ing out the great - ness of thy lov - ing heart.  
 O, how mar - ve - lous thy good - ness, lav - ished all on me!  
 and thy love, so pure, so change - less, sat - is - fies my heart.  
 rest - ing 'neath thy smile, Lord Je - sus, earth's dark sha - dows flee.



Thou hast bid me gaze up - on thee as thy beau - ty fills my soul;  
 Yes, I rest in thee, be - lov - ed, know what wealth of grace is thine;  
 Sat - is - fies its deep - est long - ings, meets, sup - plies its ev - 'ry need;  
 Bright - ness of my Fa - ther's glo - ry, sun - shine of my Fa - ther's face,



for by thy trans - form - ing po - wer, thou hast made me whole.  
 know thy cer - tain - ty of prom - ise, and have made it mine.  
 com - pass - eth me round with bless - ings; thine is love in - deed!  
 keep me ev - er trust - ing, rest - ing; fill me with thy grace.



Je - sus, I am rest - ing, rest - ing in the joy of what thou art; I am



find - ing out the great - ness of thy lov - ing heart.

Come to me, all  
 who labor and are  
 heavy laden, and I  
 will give you rest.  
 Take my yoke  
 upon you, and  
 learn from me, for  
 I am gentle and  
 lowly in heart, and  
 you will find rest  
 for your souls.

Matthew 11

# GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

## The Holy Spirit works, building us up as we celebrate the Lord's Supper

*We invite to the Lord's Table all those who are baptized followers of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and his body, the Church. By eating the bread and drinking the cup, you proclaim that you are in covenant relationship with God, that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. If you have any doubts about your participation, please speak to one of the elders after the service. Wine and bread are the elements of the supper as instituted by Jesus Christ and so we follow his example.*

What the believer  
feeds upon, then,  
is not Christ's  
body as such but  
the redemptive  
benefits that he  
offers through his  
saving death.

Richard Phillips

"He Will Hold Me Fast"

1. When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast; when the  
2. Those he saves are his de-light, Christ will hold me fast; pre-cious  
3. For my life he bled and died, Christ will hold me fast; jus-tice

tempt-er would pre-vail, He will hold me fast. I could nev-er  
in his ho-ly sight, he will hold me fast. He'll not let my  
has been sat-is-fied; he will hold me fast. Raised with him to

keep my hold through life's fear-ful path; for my love is of-ten  
soul be lost; his Prom-is-es shall last; bought by him at such a  
end-less life, he will hold me fast 'til our faith is turned to

cold; he must hold me fast. He will hold me fast, he will hold me  
cost, he will hold me fast. sight, when he comes at last!

fast; for my Sav-ior loves me so, he will hold me fast.

**We grow in wisdom as we walk in the fear of the Lord giving our lives to him as we give him our tithes and offerings**

*We give our offerings to God as a public demonstration of our faith, putting our money where our mouths are. In this action we show what we claim, that our lives are organized around God and lived for him instead of ourselves.*

**We come to God in prayer asking for the promised comfort of his Spirit**

*During this time we live in faith, trusting in the power of his grace,  
placing our lives and our church in his hands.  
We ask that he would work in us and through us for his glory*

The life, power and glory of the church is prayer. The life of its members is dependent on prayer and the presence of God is secured and retained by prayer...Without it, the church is lifeless and powerless.  
E.M. Bounds

# GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

**We sing out in joy that we are built up on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ**

"The Church's One Foundation"



1. The chur - ch's one foun - da - tion is Je - sus Christ, her Lord; she
2. E - lect from ev - 'ry na - tion, yet one o'er all the earth, her
3. 'Mid toil and tri - bu - la - tion, and tu - mult of her war, she
4. Yet she on earth hath un - ion with God the Three in One, and



is his new cre - a - tion by wa - ter and the Word: from  
char - ter of sal - va - tion: one Lord, one faith, one birth: one  
waits the con - sum - ma - tion of peace for - e - ver more; 'til  
my - stic sweet com - mu - nion with those whose rest is won: O



heav'n he came and sought her to be his ho - ly bride; with  
ho - ly name she bless - es, par - takes one ho - ly food, and  
with the vi - sion glor - ious her long - ing eyes are blessed, and  
hap - py ones and ho - ly! Lord, give us grace that we, like

1. 2. 3.



his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.  
to one hope she press - es, with ev - 'ry grace en - dued.  
the great church vic - tor - ious shall be the church at rest.  
them, the meek and low - ly, on



high may dwell, that they will dwell, that we will dwell with thee.

Therefore thus  
says the Lord  
GOD, "Behold, I  
am the one who  
has laid as a  
foundation sin  
Zion, a stone, a  
tested stone, a  
precious  
cornerstone, of a  
sure foundation:  
'Whoever believes  
will not be in  
haste.'  
Isaiah 28

**We rest in the promise of his peace**

**Leader:** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed you in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose you in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him...Peace be to you, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

**People: Amen**

*Please stay and join us for a time of refreshment and enjoying each other's company.*

*This is a time to share in life together as the gospel calls us  
as we reconnect with those we know and as we meet someone new.*





## Welcome to Free Grace

We are a broken church full of broken people. We know we need God's free grace. Some of us have accepted this grace, some are exploring what it's all about. All of us are still trying to understand it. We are a church that seeks to proclaim this free grace of God with both our words and our lives. Not satisfied with simply talking about it, we want to live it out. We invite you to come, explore, and live God's free grace with us.

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### Our Connections



Free Grace is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a family of churches that seeks to be faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

### Our Leadership

Free Grace is lead by her elders, men called by God and set apart by the church to care and lead her as individual members, families, and as a whole. Our elders are:



Rev. Per Almquist (pastor)  
Brian Cosgrove  
Paul Martin  
Ken Morris  
Ben Van Dyke

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Connor Crawford, *voice*; Dan Crawford, *voice*; Joanne Crosby, *flute*; Beth Almquist, *piano*

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Church growth is not primarily  
measured in nickels or noses. It is  
measured by the peace we have:  
our resting in God in the face of life.

broken people  
bound together in Christ  
for God's glory