

God's Amazing 'Starting-Fresh' Grace
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Third in a series, "Amazed in God's Grace"

1st Peter 1.1-9

September 22, 2019

Please read the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

I've got this peach.

[Put on surgical gloves, gingerly remove it from its contained, hold it for people to see.]

I've been working on this for a couple weeks now. Left it out. Let the fruit flies at it. It's moulded. It's shrivelled. It's putrid. It's quite a mess.

One of the countless benefits of being married to Barb is her peach pies. She makes wonderful peach pies. (Elora UC: By the way, if you need incentive to serve with the Children's Worship or Youth ministry teams, listen. When she gets the teams together at the end of August, Barb serves her peach pie.)

Would Barb make a peach pie with this peach?

Of course not! Neither would you. Nor would I.

But we are not God.

II

God's grace. Grace means "gift." A gift is not earned. Grace is given.

God loves. God acts with love for us. God always loves with grace. Although we have not earned it, God gives. That's grace. Although we do not expect it, God gives. That's grace. Although we cannot return the favour, God gives. That's grace.

God loves with grace, for you, me and everyone. God loves firstly, and God loves freely.

God makes us in God's image, to reflect God's love and God's care within God's creation. God wires us to care for God's world.

That's why this human-created climate crisis is such an affront to God. We're doing a rotten job living out God's image. We are wired to act with love for each other. We mess that up too. We are made for relationship with God: to walk with love, trust, and faithfulness, alive to the presence of our Creator. But we hide. We forget God. We become dead to God and so dead to ourselves.

We get like this peach, with only remnants of life in us and decay in our souls.

What does God do?

III

Imagine it like this. We're out in the night, in a storm. We've lived there, it seems, forever. We're so used to it, we think it's normal.

Then God turns on a light, in a house nearby. We did not even know it was there. God's grace.

Actually, it's better! God doesn't turn on the light, then wait for us to find our way in. We never will. We're too storm-battered, our eyes unaccustomed to the light. *"It's probably a trap,"* we worry. *"Our eyes are playing tricks on us."* *"I remember stories of a light, but those were just childish tales; we don't believe in the light anymore."* *"There's no light."* *"Let's make our own light."*

So God does not just turn on a light for us to come to. God brings the light out to us. Jesus. Jesus is the light, and Jesus is the light-bringer.

This is God's amazing "going out to get us in" grace. (I talked about it a couple weeks ago.) God awakens us to the dark. God lets us see how very wrong it is with us and our world. God gives us desire for more, an expectation things should be better. God kindles in our pretty-much-dead spirits a spark of trust.

God comes to us. God's grace. But it's only a beginning. We are still in the dark, still in the storm. We need the shelter of the house.

IV

So Jesus carries us in.

He has to. We're too weak. We've broken ourselves too much.

With the trust God gives us, we sink into his arms, and he brings us through the door. God's grace.

That is salvation: being rescued by Jesus and brought into the house of God.

Not as guests. We're not "just dropping by for a bit." Right away, he makes us part of God's family. We belong. It's like we get our own key for the place and it's our new address. Adopted! That's how the Bible describes us.

Look! We do not know how to live there yet! We're used to the storm; we do not know to take our boots off when we come in. We are used to the dark; we have no clue how lights work. We are used to being wounded; we do not know how to be well. We are used to squabbling, fighting, and brawling; we do not know how to sit at the table together.

Does not matter! God has declared that you rightly belong: with God, in God's household, with God's family. God makes you belong, so nothing you do will get you thrown out. They call this God's "justifying grace." (I talked about this last week.) God makes us right, right at home. God's grace.

V

Something else happens when Jesus carries us through the door. He starts us over again. He starts us fresh.

Even us.

Remember my spoiled, rotten, good-for-nothing peach. God starts making a wonderful pie, out of peaches like us.

Jesus did not talk about peaches. He used a different metaphor: "born again" or "born anew." Peter, one of Jesus' first followers, knew personally what that means. So he used that metaphor too, in today's reading.

When Jesus said "born again," the person he was talking with said it made no sense. Birth is a once-in-a-lifetime event. We don't get born twice. He was no fool. But he had not grasped the immensity of God's power and God's love. God's grace.

When God brings you into God's house, God begins a new creation. No, better . . . God *re-begins* you, a new creation. God does not chuck you aside and start from scratch. God resurrects you. God resurrects you from death, and your resurrection has already started. God's grace.

They call this God's "regenerating grace." It's God's Amazing "starting us fresh" grace.

That peach, as bad as it's become, is still a peach. You, despite what you've done, no matter what's happened to you, are still wonderfully made in God's image. Out of all that squishing, stinky, shrivelled stuff that is you became, God is making that image anew. God is making you anew. Sweet, delightful, strong, and wonderful. (Maybe with light and fluffy crust.)

God's gone out to get you. God's brought you into where you are right and belong. God's started you fresh. God's grace!

"Born anew." When you entrust yourself to Jesus, that's your second birthday.

Instead of a cake, though, pie.