

Intro Slide Up

SLIDE 1 Today we come to the third value, Story Matters, in this series 6:8@Six:Eight. The complete Story of God with a clear message of Grace in Jesus from beginning to end. Our statement on this value reads like this:

Story Matters

We are rooted in the Scriptures, the Story of a loving God pursuing his children. It is a story in four parts, what it was like (*creation*), what happened (*fall*), what it is like now (*redemption*), and what it will be (*restoration*). The central character is Jesus who lovingly bore in himself our judgment, and guides us by his timeless teaching. This story extends through his followers in history. It encompasses and speaks to all issues of life, restoring our relationship to God, and bringing freedom & joy where there was once none.

SLIDE 2 *The mature Christian in the issue of Story is not only knowledgeable of God's Word, but has allowed it to influence, and guide, all aspects of their life. They see themselves as rooted in the biblical story, which is larger than themselves, beginning in creation, and ending in the hope of restoration. They are not only able to 'quote' or lead a person to certain ideas or verses, but more importantly, are able to apply them in ways that are refreshing and challenging to the soul. Their world view is shaped by the story of God, how they view life, and reality; it is born out of this holistic story. They do not try to impress with their knowledge, but if one listens closely to the mature Christian, they can hear that their words are bolstered with the ideas and verses of Scripture. They no longer dwell on the elementary teachings, but have moved onto deeper issues of the faith. They do not try to impress, but are just 'being'.*

Last week we talked about the value of Grace. Often times, after initially accepting God's grace we try to live our lives as if we had to gain acceptance by what we do, how we look, through accomplishments, etc. **SLIDE 3** We are restored to God by grace once for all, yet we are also transformed by grace daily. We bring death to ourselves, and to community, when we set up a protective hedge of Law around ourselves & others. Life in Christ means that we have to bring our thoughts & hearts back to the cross allowing God to crucify our desires rather than fruitlessly trying to save ourselves via anything other than grace.

Life is ambiguous. Mature Christians need to become comfortable living in that ambiguity, we live in community with differing opinions. We tend to focus on external behavior instead of the heart. For example, someone may say that a young woman wearing a shorter skirt is 'over the top'. However, yet herself wearing a tight red dress is just as provocative. The style of dress is just culturally acceptable in different crowds. One shops at Anne Taylor, the other, Urban Outfitters. People see things differently.

SLIDE 4 My friend was sitting in Turkey at an outdoor cafe with some Muslim friends one day. Western clad women strolled by and his friends didn't take notice. He thought they must be so pious and self-controlled. But then a woman walked by in full burqa with only her hands, feet, and eyes showing. Her eye makeup was thick, her hands and feet painted with Henna, and the wind blew the burqa against her body revealing her feminine form - and his Muslim friends went nuts. "You would've thought they were drunken frat boys at a strip joint!" The truth is, the gospel is not about judging externals, it is about right relationship with God, allowing him to correct our hearts to live out of grace.

What we think is 'right' sometimes is either actually 'not right', or at the least, neither right nor wrong, but a matter of preference. **SLIDE 5** And grace addresses the deeper questions as to

'why' we do what we do. Why do I seek attention in negative ways? Why does that person bother me with how they are? Why does my mind need very little external stimulus, if any, to be so perverted? (Short term Bikini story) There is a fear that we are going to degenerate into sin and lawlessness when living by grace, but grace is the only avenue for true unity, patience, love, and to give & receive forgiveness in community.

SLIDE 6 Our goal is to live out of grace, allowing God to crucify the old self with all its fear, pride, anger, and insecurity; to model the heart of God to each other and the world. To do that well we must understand the complete Story of God as seen in the Scriptures. To see that Grace has been at the forefront and the continuing Story of God.

SLIDE 7 This begs a question, what is the relationship between the Law and Promise? Isn't the OT about Law, and the NT about grace? Because most Christians view the story of God as seen in the Scriptures something like this; **SLIDE 8** God created Adam & Eve to live in perfect harmony with him. They chose to turn away. So, God sat back and scratched his head and said, "Well I'll give them this Law to live by, and if they live right, then I will accept them, if not, I will cut them off." And then when he figured out that was useless, he sent Jesus as a payment for the sin revealed in us by the very law he put in place. In this view, Old and New Testaments are separate stories. The Scripture becomes a disjointed conglomeration of a bunch of stories from different people with no unifying theme. **SLIDE 9** But grace has always been the central theme, the end goal of this story has always been Jesus. Scripture must be read more like a novel than short stories. Jesus said the Scripture speaks of him, referring to the OT. Paul and others saw the gospel of grace all throughout the Hebrew Scriptures - they did not have the NT at the time and preached this message of grace via the Hebrew Scriptures - the OT.

SLIDE 10 I would expect that when my father passes away he will leave a will. I will. As I wrote out my will I did it in the assurance that my wishes would be followed to the tee. That when I die, no matter the circumstances, the conditions of my will should be carried out no questions asked. Paul is making that argument in Galatians 3:15-25 when he says that just as with a human document where nothing can be added or taken away it is the same with God's promise. With this I want to give you one small glimpse into the unity of the Scripture as it pertains to the Story of Grace throughout the whole. And this is only a glimpse, by no means is it exhaustive. Let me read it.

SLIDE 11 ¹⁵Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. ¹⁶The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

SLIDE 12 ¹⁷What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

SLIDE 13 ¹⁹What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. ²⁰A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one.

It is easy to see what he is referring to when talking about a human covenant. A will or a contract with a mediator between two parties. And Paul is making a contrast to God's Promise given to Abraham back in Genesis 12 but he says that promise, or covenant was made by one party, God. It says,

SLIDE 14

The Lord had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.

²“I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.ⁱ

³I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”¹

In Galatians 3, as Paul refers to the Promise in Genesis 12 and also 15, there there are some very confusing things, for instance:

SLIDE 15 This idea of ‘Seed’ which comes later in Genesis 12:7, 13:15 & 24:7

- Paul says there were four parts to the promise that God gave to Abram in Gen. 12 & 15
 - Seed or offspring in the singular
 - Land
 - Israel will be blessed – his descendants will be numerous
 - Israel will be a blessing to all nations

God promised a number of things, and in one sense God was making it clear to Abraham, **SLIDE 16** that the Messiah will come through his lineage. It is interesting to think that Abraham, at the time, was just a man chosen by God. He was an Iraqi, called out of the Ur of the Chaldeans. Our father of faith is an old Iraqi guy, sort of ironic. His background was that he probably worshipped the local deity; he was a pagan. He did not have the Scriptures, the Temple, the Church, orthodoxy & doctrine, or much to go on at all. He may have possibly had a few creation & flood stories to go from, but that is about it until God calls him.

God calls, God chooses, not us (Eph 2 again). Right orthodoxy, although important, is not necessary for salvation. All that is necessary is passive righteousness - receiving God’s grace by faith in God’s promise. **SLIDE 17** Now a lot of people will say they ‘believe in God’, but very few will say they ‘believe God’, there is a difference. We cannot make up God to fit what we want him to be. God reveals himself in the Scriptures, in Christ, and in Creation; we accept & believe on God’s terms. Abraham believed God in a four part promise.

SLIDE 18 The other confusing thing in this set of verses is: A mediator does not just represent one party, but God is one. This is confusing, because a contract or covenant is always made between two parties. It is so confusing that there are more than 300 interpretations of this passage! But, let me attempt to give some clarity.

SLIDE 19 R.C. Sproul is often asked, what he thinks is a strange question, what is your life verse? In other words if you had to have just one verse what would it be? Strange since he would want the whole Scripture Story, but to pick one it would be Genesis 15:17 which says,¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.

Strange verse. Now, to understand Galatians 3 and this one party idea, I think we have to understand this verse in Genesis 15:17. You must understand the covenant process that God

¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ge 12:1–3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

was undertaking with Abraham. **SLIDE 20** In OT times if a king conquered another they would 'cut' a covenant, not 'make', but 'cut' a covenant. What they would do is take animals, cut them down the middle and lay the two halves opposite each other making a bloody aisle so to speak. Then the two parties would walk down the middle of this aisle reciting their promise to each other as a covenant. What they were basically saying to each other was, if I break our covenant, may I end up like these animals; dead. Two parties making a covenant promise, a contract for future relationship.

So, let's read around Genesis 15:17

SLIDE 21 ⁹ So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half.

SLIDE 22 ¹² As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him.

SLIDE 23 ¹⁷ When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates".

God cut a covenant with Abraham here. **SLIDE 24** But the interesting thing is that when it came time to walk the aisle, Abraham was in a deep sleep. God, by himself, represented by the smoking fire-pot and a burning torch, walked the aisle cutting the covenant as one party with Abraham. So, in essence what God was saying is, 'I make this covenant with you as one party. The whole covenant is therefore based on my Word, my Promise, by Grace, and not your ability to hold up your end of the bargain.' Not based on two party's behavior. God is saying, if I fail at this, then I am placing all of my deity on the line, you do nothing for it. Very gracious of God.

So, to summarize, what Paul is saying to us is, God chooses us, not based on our merit, just like he chose Abraham, an old Iraqi guy. Abraham believed God's promise to him. **SLIDE 25** That is why it says in Romans 4, ³ What does Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."² and, ¹³ It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.³

When we hear that God chose us, and sacrificed himself on that cross taking our sin away and becoming cursed, placing his righteousness on us, we believe it, and believe it every day of our lives! Not just the day we are saved, but we should know that that grace happened on the cross, and it has nothing to do with what I do to be right with God, even now. Just like it didn't with Abraham.

SLIDE 26 Paul adds very adeptly, The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. ¹⁸For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise.

You see to base your relationship with God on the Law takes two parties, one party sets the standard as sovereign king, and the other keeps it as vassal king. **SLIDE 27** But the Promise/Covenant came 430 years before the Law, and the Law cannot nullify the Promise because

² *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ro 4:3). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ro 4:13). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

God's Word cannot be broken. God promised that it was He that cut and kept the covenant with his people, not based on anything we do. Think of it this way. **SLIDE 28** Paul uses the word *inheritance* in 3:18. If I am promised an inheritance by my father in his will, I do nothing but believe that he promised that inheritance. But if someone comes to me and says, I have no descendants and will die soon, IF you take care of me, THEN I will give you an inheritance, then that is based on *performance*. It is a conditional statement. Well, God promised to Abraham, and likewise to us, that we are his children by grace through faith alone way back then. All that is his, is ours, based only on grace through faith. The Promise came first and cannot be broken; he never said if you obey my Law then you will have the inheritance. The promise depends on God, therefore based on relationship, not performance.

SLIDE 29 He then says ¹⁹What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.

SLIDE 30 And also, ²²But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

SLIDE 31 ²³Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. ²⁴So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

In Indonesia we had house help. I loved it after a while, any man would really; all I had to do after a while was say, "Naah, minta teh!" And my helper, Naah, would reply, "Iyo Pak, 'bentar Pak." And, magically my tea would appear on my desk, made just to my liking – it was heaven! My wife doesn't do that, I miss Indonesia.

Naah didn't just clean the house, she babysat as well. You can imagine a young couples concern with what our children would learn since Naah was a poor Muslim woman from a highly spiritualistic culture. **SLIDE 32** She had input into the character development of our children. She was a pedagogue, a nanny or tutor to our children.

SLIDE 33 Likewise, Paul uses the word pedagogue in vs. 24. The Law is like a pedagogue charged with the discipline, protection, and leading of a child to school; the pedagogue has moral input and their principles would guide a child into adulthood; The Law, he says is like this, leading us into our adult life of faith, revealing God's standard. But at some point the child grows and is released from the hand of the nanny, however, the lessons learned by the Law carry on into adult life.

You see, Scripture tells us that the Law of God is written on our hearts, we naturally know right from wrong in many cases. **SLIDE 34** However, the Law, more clearly laid out in Scripture, was instituted as a pedagogue which would lead us to Christ and instruct us on God's standard. The Law, by defining sin more clearly reveals sin in us, taking us by the hand and bringing us to the point that we realized we are in need of a Savior; in need of grace.

We are not living in a world where we can just choose not to sin; remember that is viewing sin superficially, which leaves us in the position of being God over ourselves - sin is a condition of our humanity. Paul makes it deathly clear here that we are prisoners, locked away in our sin nature awaiting release. That release comes through faith in Christ; we are justified by faith in Christ, and transformed daily by grace. One way to look at this whole thing concerning the Law and the Promise is that God, as our father, is promising that we have an inheritance, and He says concerning His Law, **SLIDE 35** "Since you are my children loved and accepted by me, the Law is my standard for living, but you cannot live that standard without me, my grace will grow you over time into my likeness by convicting you via this standard."

SLIDE 36 The Law therefore is good; it originates from God and defines his standard. It is something we should attain to. But again, we do not get our value by how well we attain to it, but through the relationship established by grace. Daily it reminds us of our need for him and continually should drive us back to grace which has been from the beginning of the whole Story.

SLIDE 37 So, if I am trusting in something other than the Gospel of Grace, then I am breaking the first commandment of God's Law, "You shall have no other Gods before me." If I am trusting in my looks, the way I dress, my eloquence, my skills, my money, drugs, sex, alcohol, attention from others, my pride or accomplishments, or anything to make me feel secure in life; if I am seeking comfort, approval, control, or power to find security. The Law says that I have set myself up as a my own god. And, until I can bring that unhealthy desire before the cross allowing God to crucify that old self, I am breaking God's first commandment – and it is interesting that if you read the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, which is the Law, you will realize that if we break any of the others, we are automatically breaking the first.

SLIDE 38 Tim Keller (p64/66-67 Galatians Leaders Guide) says that those Christians that live trying to justify their existence by the Law are the most insecure, angry, and frustrated people around, even more so than those outside the Church. So many in the church live as if they are trying to prove themselves by the Law that it makes the Church a mean and hostile place at times. How many times have you heard people say that Christians like to eat their own? This is why. Many Christians are not living out of grace. If a person is living by the Law, they are not only frustrated, angry, and insecure, but they most definitely will develop a secret sin life.

SLIDE 39 We must live by grace; the complete Story of God! This is why there are so many more one-another verses espousing encouragement, love, forgiveness, mercy, and such, as opposed to verses on confrontation in Scripture. This is why Jesus said what he did in Matthew 22:37-40

SLIDE 40 ³⁷Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

If we love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, do you think it is possible to live in anger, secret sin, pride, fear, etc...? No, and if you are loving your neighbor as yourself, don't you think you will be leading them by grace towards the cross instead of belittling them and making them feel even worse about themselves? **SLIDE 41** So, Six:Eight lives out of the Story of a loving God pursuing his children. It is a story in four parts, what it was like (*creation*), what happened (*fall*), what it is like now (*redemption*), and what it will be (*restoration*). It is a story that has always been marked by God's grace.

SLIDE 42 Your homework this week is to read the Ten Commandments in Chapter 20 of Exodus and pray that God will reveal to you where you are not giving him Lordship in your life; where you have not been living out of Grace. Ask him where you have broken his commandments; make amends with him and others. Resist the urge to say, "I'm sorry for this thing, but...!" Love God by loving his commandments remembering that your value comes not from how well you have lived up to these things but in relationship by grace through faith. Love others by extending grace as you have been extended grace. Take your sin to the cross, allow God to crucify and find freedom in Christ once more!