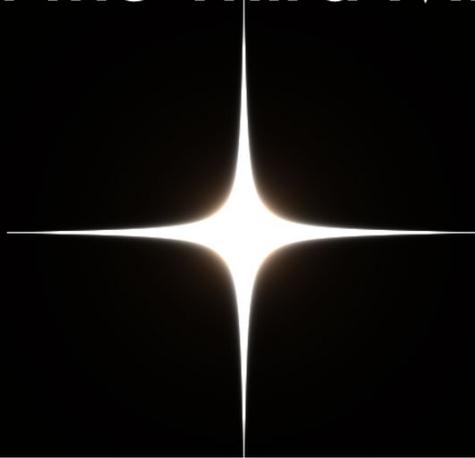


Grace in the Third Millennium



by

Mark McGee

Not too often, but sometimes, I'll look back at GraceLife articles from many years ago to get some perspective on how we're doing. Some of the articles go back more than 30 years, but this one is more recent. I wrote it at the turn of the millennium while thinking about what was ahead for the Body of Christ on earth. Now that same article may help us look back on how we've done during the past 15 years and what we can do better in service to our Savior, Lord and King, Jesus Christ in the years to come.

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It's amazing but true. We are now part of the Third Millennium A.D. Futurists predict that science and technology will advance more in this new millennium than all the other millenniums combined. In fact, many believe humanity will progress further in the next 100 years than in all the centuries preceding it, including the 20th Century! That's stunning when we consider where the human race was in 1899 and where it was a hundred years later in 1999. We invented lasers and computer chips in the 20th Century. We discovered cures to deadly diseases. We traveled around the world in a matter of hours instead of weeks. We sent astronauts to the Moon. It would seem that humanity is at the door of its greatest achievements.

However, there is a problem. The human race has not been able to do anything about its single, greatest problem: sin. Sin is killing us every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year of every century of every millennium, including this new one. We as a people are dying. We are dying physically. We are dying emotionally. We are dying spiritually. Many, possibly most, are dying in their sin with no hope for any lasting future of peace, love and happiness. Surveys taken in the last century about what people really wanted out of life gave the same insights – people want peace, love and happiness. We try in all the wrong ways. We are hopeless without Someone to guide us. All anyone can do alone is go in the direction their lusts take them. They don't know any better. They are dead in their sin. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Things will not get better for the human race in the Third Millennium. In fact, things will get worse. They've been getting worse since Adam and Eve sinned against God thousands of years ago. All of the knowledge we've acquired as a people, all of the scientific breakthroughs we've made, all of the things we've accomplished have done absolutely nothing to improve our standing in the universe. Because we are no better now than we were millennia ago; in fact, we are worse off than ever. We're fooling ourselves if we think for one second that we are spiritually and morally better off than our ancestors. We've lived high on the false belief that knowledge and information were the answers to everything we needed. We've believed wrongly that knowledge would bring peace, information would bring love, and human achievement would bring happiness. It hasn't.

Walk down the street of any city in the world and look into the faces of everyone you see. Look at the business people wearing \$400 suits and typing e-mail on \$3,000 laptop computers. Look at the busy parent driving their children to a \$200-an-hour psychiatrist in their \$30,000 mini-van. Listen to the conversation of the teenage girl wearing designer clothes and a \$500 watch talking to her boyfriend on a \$200 cell phone about getting a \$2,000 abortion. Do you see any peace in their eyes? Do you hear any love and happiness in their voices? Absolutely not. What we see is anger, fear and frustration. Why are they so angry? Because nothing they've ever done at anytime in their lives has given them what they really want. They want peace, love and happiness so bad they can taste it, but they

can't get it.

That's where you and I come in. We know something that has eternal value. We have information everybody needs. So, what's the problem? We're not telling them. The sad fact is we have the one thing that will bring everybody in this world peace, love and happiness and we're not telling them. How can that be? Are all of us physically unable to walk and talk? Has some terrible disease made us unable to communicate to others? No. The sad truth is we just don't care enough to do anything about what we know.

We need to look at the Third Millennium A.D. the way God looks at the Third Millennium. He loves the people of this planet. He loves them so much He sent His One and Only Son to this planet at the beginning of the First Millennium A.D. to tell the people how much His Father loved them. The One and Only Son came to this little speck in the universe to die for the people who call this little blue piece of cosmic dust home. The One and Only Son didn't die by accident. He didn't die of old age. He didn't die without pain. He didn't die quickly. The One and Only Son died a long, painful, agonizing death. Jesus Christ died nailed to two pieces of wood sticking out of the ground of a little city in a little country in a little part of the little speck called Earth. Jesus died at the beginning of the First Millennium A.D. so people of all time could have hope. Jesus bled and bled and bled and bled until He was dead so we could know true peace, love and happiness. He became our Peace. He is our Love. He is our Happiness. He can be that for a lot of other people as well.

God has a Vision. He wants to accomplish something before time comes to a close and He shuts the door on this planet. God wants to save people. That's right, save people. People are lost. They are in desperate need of salvation. Everyone is lost. Nobody is without sin, except for the One and Only Son. He never sinned. He never did anything wrong. He was always right. His Rightness goes back a long time, even longer than time. He was the Righteous One from before time. That's why He can save us. That's how He does it. Jesus saves us because He's Perfect and nobody else is. No one other than Jesus has the Power to save anybody. That means everybody is hopelessly lost and alone without Jesus Christ.

Back to God's Vision. He knows that. He knows we can't do anything to save ourselves. He knows no one else in the universe can save us. He knows that only He can save us. What He's done is give members of His Family of Grace that information and tell them to tell others. He saves me, I tell you, He saves you, you tell someone, He saves them, they tell someone, etc. It's a simple but highly effective system, "if" we tell someone. God's Family is made up of people who have acknowledged to God that they are dead in their sins and lost without His One and Only Son. The Family is the people who have asked God to forgive them of their sins and who have received Jesus Christ as their Savior. Sounds simple and it should mean that almost everybody in the world is saved, but the Family is not that big. Look at your part of the planet. How many of your neighbors, friends and co-workers are part of the Family? Let's get personal: how many members of your own family are saved? Yikes! What happened?

I think what's happened is we just don't get it – “we” being members of God's Saved Family. We just don't get it. We don't know or understand what God is doing today. We sing about salvation at church. We say “amen” a couple of times during a good sermon. We may even pray for the lost during the week, but we don't get it. We haven't touched God's Love-filled Heart in so many years that we've forgotten what's going on around us. Hey, life on earth is not about getting stuff. It's not about climbing ladders or making the grade. It's not about succeeding or even saving face. It's about saving souls. **God's in the Business of saving people's eternal lives.** He's in the Business of Uniting us with Jesus Christ; making us part of Him, One with Him. Neat, huh? That's His Vision. That's what He wants from us. He wants us to tell somebody about Jesus – their sin and His salvation.

If we're honest with each other, and since we're family we can do that, the first two Millennium A.D. haven't gone so well. We started well. Jesus died on the Cross and paid for our sins. That's excellent! His disciples told everybody they could find about salvation, but not many people wanted to hear it. In fact, some people killed Christ's follower to shut them up. It didn't work, though. God changed a hot-blooded Jewish prosecutor into a lover of Gentiles who traveled the world declaring the wonderful Grace of God. That was also a good thing.

Paul led people to Christ, started lots of churches, taught teachers how to teach and leaders how lead. But you know what? It wasn't long before members of God's Family started whining and complaining about what God had given them. Paul had to write more and more letters to explain God's Vision to them. What did he get for it? At the end of his life, Paul wrote that few people had stood with him. Most people had left him. Even so, Paul wrote: "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." Did you hear what Paul wrote? "...that all the Gentiles might hear." Paul got it! He understood God's Vision. Paul knew what God wanted and he was intent on going to his death (which he did shortly after writing these words) giving everything he had to The Vision.

Unfortunately, not many people have shared Paul's passion since the First Century A.D. Instead of being a powerful, unified Family of the Almighty God of the Universe, we are a pitifully small, unorganized, disunified group of vagabonds with no discipline and little idea of what to do about it.

I think God was disappointed with Christians at the end of the Second Millennium. Since that was just several days ago, He probably still is ... disappointed with us. How does it feel to know God's disappointed with us? I feel pretty bad about it to be honest. I'm not proud of what most of us have done. I'm not proud about what I've done. My vision of what can be accomplished in a lifetime is mighty small compared to God's Eternal Vision.

We Christians don't think big enough. We don't think like God Thinks. Paul thought like God Thinks. That's one of the things that made Paul such a great and unique leader. Paul didn't want to do what Paul wanted to do. Paul wanted to do what God wanted Paul to do. Paul wanted to be so close to God that he shared His Mind. That's an amazing relationship.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians that they had the Mind of Christ. It's a gift God gives His Family of Grace. He doesn't give it to anyone else. God gives His Spirit and His Mind only to those who belong to Him.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For 'who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?' But we have the mind of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 2:12-16

Yes, we are very special indeed. Unfortunately, most Christians don't know how special they are or are so caught up in this world that they spend their days on worldly enterprises instead of what God wants.

Reminds me of the next thing Paul wrote the Corinthians: “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) Sounds like something Paul would write most of our Christian churches if he were in town today. Sad, isn't it? Christians didn't get it in the First Millennium. They didn't get it in the Second Millennium. Will they, will we, get it in the Third? I hope so. We need some big changes “in” us. It's easy to gather around the fellowship table and wag about how bad the world is, how bad sinners are, and how good we are in comparison. It's another thing to leave the table, walk outside and do something about it. It's another thing to put ourselves aside, unite with God's Mind, see His Vision, love who He Loves, and pray that he'll use us to make His Vision happen in our communities. That's quite another thing.

We need God's Love and Grace in the Third Millennium. We need to know it, understand it, feel it, want it, pray for it, get it and do it. God's Love and Grace are the only things that will make a lasting difference. We've met together, preached together, sung together, prayed together, shouted together, rejoiced together and hoped together. We've seen a little hint of God's Grace in our time, but is that it? Is that all there is to God's Grace? Just a hint? Just a little bit? Just a small taste? What ever happened to the Almighty God with the Everlasting Arms?

Where's the God we sing about? Where's the God Who loves all the little children of the world? Where's the God Who can move mountains and change the course of great rivers? Where's the God Who can control the hearts of kings? Where's the God Who Loves with a Love that has no boundaries, doesn't see the color of a person's skin, doesn't count how much money they have in the bank? Where's the God Who shakes nations and penetrates the thoughts and intents of its leaders? Where's the God Who can heal the brokenhearted and raise the dead to life? Where is He? Look in front of you. He's there. Look to your left. He's there. Look right. He's there. Look behind you. He's there. Look up. He's there. Look down. He's there. Look inside. He's there. God's been there for His people for thousands of years. He doesn't play hide and seek with us. He doesn't clock out for lunch. He's always with us. That means His Vision for lost souls is always with us. If He has the Vision and He's always with us, something's wrong if the Vision is not part of us.

Back to reality. Do I think these thoughts will make a difference in what happens this new millennium? I don't know. I hope so. I hope this article and other articles and sermons and lessons and web sites and television and radio programs and any other possible way to communicate will help all of us get with the program, God's Program, and make a big difference in the lives of millions of people.

We live at a time when communication and outreach are easier and faster than at any other time in history. We can tell people in person, on paper, by telephone, on television, through radio, in the World

Wide Web, by e-mail, on satellite, on the movie screen, by fax, by voice message, just to name some. Let's use what's in front of us. Tell somebody this week that you love them. Tell them God Loves them. Tell them God's Son died for them. Tell them how to be saved. Make sure everybody knows. Take the Grace of God to the World! That's His Vision.

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