

Truth in Grace

Truth in Grace Ministries

Dan Hayden, Director

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By LIFE or by DEATH

Dan's Desk

Diving conditions on Interstate 36 were not good. It was the last week of July, 1996, and I was returning from a week-long speaking engagement at a camp in northern Wisconsin. The rain had been heavy at times, but now it was just steady — one of those all-day summer rains. Saturday afternoon traffic is always heavy during that time of the year in central Wisconsin as vacationers come and go with RV's, boats, pop-up campers, and rooftop carryalls. Yet things were moving along at a normal pace, and in spite of the rain many drivers were still seeking to pass the more cautious travelers.

For me on that day, passing the slower customized van and boat seemed routine. The left lane was clear as I inched past the tandem vehicle and trailer, proceeding as expected. Suddenly the heavens opened without warning and a torrential downpour engulfed us all. The first sensation was visual — I could not see. Simultaneously I felt the rear of the car moving to the right and the realization was immediate. My heart was in my throat — I was hydroplaning.

My hands manipulated the steering wheel instinctively, turning to the right to compensate for the shift. But the swing back to the left was dramatic and the attempt to regain control was hopeless. It was as though I was on a sheet of ice, spinning in dizzy revolutions at 65 mph along the slight downgrade of the Interstate highway. I was no longer the driver. My life was in the hands of God.

The southbound lanes on which I had been traveling were at a higher elevation than the northbound lanes, and the grassy median had a corresponding steep slope down to a drainage gully before gaining a slight rise into oncoming traffic. As the car spun into the median, I sensed that I was

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going backwards down the embankment. The sound of grass swishing by under the car was all that I could hear as I awaited my fate.

Then the wheels slammed into the gully and the car began to flip — first onto its side, with glass exploding through the air, and then with tires spinning toward the sky. I was hanging upside down in the tight grip of the seat belt as the car tobogganed on its rooftop along the slope of the gully. I braced myself for the impact of an oncoming car, anticipating sliding into the busy northbound lanes; but the upward angle of the median kept the car on a parallel trajectory with the highway. And then, finally, it was over. I reached up, turned off the key, and listened to the rain.

I was alive. Furthermore, I didn't hurt... anywhere. Later I discovered a minor cut on my arm from flying glass, but that was the extent of my injuries. I was examined by the EMT's, signed a waiver, and the ambulance returned to its garage — without me. God had spared my life. The car was dead, but I was alive and well.

Road Work Dead Ahead

For Aaron, however, it was different. The little town of Brooktondale, New York is anything but busy. "Traffic" is not in their vocabulary; and a collision is as unexpected as snow in October.

Aaron was young, athletic, and recently married. He was enjoying life — God was good. He also had a strong testimony of love for Christ among his friends and with the kids on his soccer teams. Coaching soccer at the local community college, as well as at a local Christian school, kept him busy. But it was early March, and spring practice hadn't begun yet, so when he heard that his pastor needed a ride to the hospital for treatment of a recurring illness, he jumped at the chance to help. In his love for the Lord, he was developing a servant spirit.

The Valley Road leading into Brooktondale had deteriorated under the effects of a long, hard winter and now that some of the snow and ice had cleared, workmen were in the process of making needed repairs. As Aaron made his way along the country road through the valley toward the pastor's house, the curve below White Church prevented him from seeing the construction activity. Nor could he see the truck that was making its way around the site — on his side of the highway.

Suddenly as he cleared the curve, it was all before him — he had nowhere to go. Even the quick reflexes of a seasoned athlete were not sufficient to avoid impending doom. As the car slammed into the imposing County truck, Aaron went to be with the Lord.

Those who have lost a loved one to an accident can imagine the deep grief of his wife and family. Yet in the midst of

their sorrow, God brought a two-fold comfort. First, Aaron was in the presence of Christ, and that was something for which to praise the Lord. Secondly, however, there was a magnifying of the name of Jesus in all the events surrounding his death.

The church was packed at Aaron's funeral (I was there too), not only with family and friends, but also with kids from the teams he had coached. They had respect for Aaron, and they were there to honor the memory of their friend and mentor. There were many testimonies that day of appreciation for Aaron and his love for Christ — and the Gospel was clearly given. Thus, in the aftermath of all that had happened, the message of Christ went with the memory of Aaron back to the schools and throughout the surrounding communities. Aaron had died — but in his death, he had brought glory to Christ.

Here's the Point

So what does all of this mean? Why have I related these stories? Well, let me explain.

Here were two automobile accidents, four months apart, in the year of 1996. Both were Christian men traveling alone. Both had a testimony of faithfulness to Christ and both were traveling as a result of ministry unto the Lord. There was absolutely no qualitative difference in the spiritual condition of their lives that could account for a difference in their fate. Yet one lived and one died. Why? That is the question I kept asking myself. Why did I live, and why did Aaron die?

In reality, I have discovered that only God knows the answer to that question. I have also come to realize that there is a spiritual principle that puts these kinds of inequities into perspective. For the Christian whose life is governed by the truth of God, there is one desire with regard to all matters of destiny — and that is that Christ will be glorified. If we are oriented toward personal fulfillment as the goal of life, then God is expected to fit into our plans. We argue that things should be fair and equal. But when the glory of Christ is the passion of our souls, then any hardship, and even death itself is accepted as an opportunity to glorify the Savior. Paul expressed it this way:

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20,21 KJV).

Personal reactions to the circumstances of life, especially when life is unfair, are greatly influenced by this truth. If our overall view of life is anthropocentric (man-centered/self-centered), then we will complain about the adversities of life and accuse God of loving others more than He loves us. But if our orientation to life is Christocentric (Christ-centered), then we are more likely to be content with the uniqueness of our personal state of affairs.



The glory of Christ is the key. *That Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death* is the principle that helps me to make sense out of the mixed bag of destinies experienced by the people of God. Aaron certainly glorified Christ in his death. The challenge for me then, is to continue to glorify Christ with my life.

What Shall This Man Do?

Perhaps an illustration of this principle from the Bible will help. It is the story of Peter and John found in John 21.

Peter was learning some valuable spiritual lessons the hard way — through failure. He had denied the Lord three times and now Christ was reminding him of that failure by asking him three times if Peter truly loved Him. Peter was grieved at the realization that his love for the Savior was suspect, but he also knew in his heart that Jesus was right. The one ray of hope was that Jesus was not eliminating him from service, for He had said each time that Peter should feed His sheep.

Genuine love for the Savior was not the only lesson Peter needed to learn, however. Yielding to the sovereign control of Christ over his life was another issue of grave importance for him. So on that same occasion our Lord went on to talk about the means by which Peter would die. He said,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God... (John 21:18,19).

Peter eventually did die a martyr's death, according to tradition, being crucified upside-down by Nero, the Roman Emperor. On the occasion by the beach, however, Jesus' words were a severe challenge to Peter and, again he was off balance. It all seemed so unfair that he should have to bear such a heavy burden. Looking around the group in his frustration, he spotted John who obviously seemed to be having an easier time of it. Through the ages, comparison with others has always been a favorite means of arguing with the Lord — and so he said to Jesus, *“Lord, and what about this man?”* (v. 21).

The prediction that Peter was going to die a martyr's death made him anxious to know if John's fate would be on an equal par with his own. Would Jesus act with fairness or would

He act with partiality, giving John preferential treatment? Would John also face the challenge of martyrdom?

As Jesus had done so often in the past with His interrogators, He turned the question back on Peter as the means of causing him to think. It was another important lesson for all of the disciples, who were listening in on the conversation. Jesus simply said, *“If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!”* (v. 22).

In essence, Jesus said that Peter could not understand the unique situation of his death by comparing himself with someone else's destiny. Peter and John were each different, and the will of Christ for each of them was an individual matter. It was not Peter's business to know what Jesus would do in John's life, nor why He would act differently with each of them. It was not Peter's concern to compare John's destiny with his. The Lord's will for each of them was unique as it fit His purpose in the overall plan of redemption. Peter's responsibility was to keep his eyes on the Lord and to follow Him.

Peter did indeed die a premature death some forty years prior to John. There is no question about it, though. Peter brought glory to Christ by his death (cf. v. 19) and John brought glory to Christ in the course of his longer life. To this day

both men continue to be held in high esteem by the people of God, not because they were equal, but because they each magnified the Lord. And therein lies the lesson. The only thing that matters for the one who loves Christ is that in everything He will be glorified — whether by life or by death.

So dear Christian friend, stop comparing your situation of life with the circumstances of others. Nothing good can come of that. Rather, realize that you are the special object of Christ's love and that you are unique in His plan. Bringing glory to Christ is all that matters — whether by pleasure or by suffering, whether by riches or by poverty, whether by exaltation or by humiliation ...whether by life or by death.

The only thing that matters for the one who loves Christ is that in everything He will be glorified.



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of Rhinelander, Wisconsin. See the back page for details.



What is News & Reviews TRUTH in GRACE

Truth in Grace Ministries is a communications ministry emphasizing the careful exposition of God's Word within its Christocentric context for the purpose of edifying and encouraging God's people. That, in a nutshell, is what we are all about. Actually, Truth in Grace is an outreach endeavor of Grace Church of West Ottawa in western Michigan, and highlights the Bible teaching ministry of Dan Hayden, who is the Pastor/Teacher of Grace Church. Our vision, simply stated, is to influence God's people with the sufficiency of Scripture and the sufficiency of Christ for all matters of life and ministry. In essence, we are committed to the "solas" of Reformation truth — Scripture alone, Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone, and to the glory of God alone. As God permits us to develop audio and video tape studies, various literature projects, a radio ministry, and Holy Lands trips — it will be our sincere and continued purpose to communicate these truths.

Grace Church is a relatively new ministry in western Michigan (about five years old) and was established for the purpose of offering an alternative opportunity to the people in the area for a Bible exposition-based church. On January 1, 1997, Dan Hayden became the Pastor/Teacher of Grace Church and brought an expositional strength to the pulpit ministry. God has also blessed Grace Church with a strong ministry to children, under the leadership of Associate Pastor Ken Gentzler, and a wonderful ministry of music under the direction of Stu Kinniburgh. Recently, an emphasis on evangelism and youth has been initiated so that there is an additional excitement of reaching into the community with the Gospel of Christ. Located between Holland and Grand Haven on Highway 31, just west of Grand Rapids, we feel that Grace Church is in a strategic position to be used of God in the western Michigan area.

Truth in Grace Ministries was organized in the spring of '98 as a means of reaching out more widely with the teaching ministry of Grace Church. Currently the secretary of Truth in Grace is also the secretary of Grace Church, and our phone and fax come through the church office. Furthermore, the Board of Directors of Truth in Grace is comprised of the elders of Grace Church, and Dan Hayden is both the Pastor/Teacher of Grace Church and the Executive Director of Truth in Grace. There is certainly a complement of ministry between the Church and Truth in Grace.

Yet the two ministries are separate organizational entities with separate financial structures (Truth in Grace is also an approved 501(c)3



Top: Grace Church; Above: Sola Scriptura

not-for-profit ministry). This allows Truth in Grace to engage in a broad spectrum of communications ministries without encumbering the Church with the organizational and financial concerns that such a ministry entails. As a result of all this we are beginning to see, by God's grace, the realization of this vision. As you can see in these pages, our tape ministry and Holy Lands trips (April in Israel '99) are now in progress. Plans for a radio ministry are still being pursued, but realistically we have had to delay our start-up time until the first of the year. We have begun, and excitement is running high. So, praise the Lord!

Sola Scriptura in Grand Haven, Michigan is another part of the equation for Truth in Grace Ministries, and is graciously providing production skills and facilities for our ministry. Sola Scriptura is another non-profit ministry that is the parent organization for The Sign Ministries (a prophetic teaching ministry) and is affiliated with The Scriptorium (a large private collection of ancient biblical manuscripts). Although Truth in Grace is not under the organizational umbrella of Sola Scriptura, we have nonetheless, been offered the use of its facilities and personnel for all of our production work. This includes a state-of-the-art radio studio, a full-time audio engineer for our tape and radio ministries, a graphics artist and production manager for our literature ministry (What do you think of our first ministry quarterly?), and the secretarial and managerial capabilities for disseminating our ministry products. As you can imagine, this is a tremendous blessing for which we are thanking the Lord.

So now you know the "what" of Truth in Grace Ministries. In future issues of this publication, we also want to introduce you to the "who."

A Word from the Word

MAGNIFY

μεγαλυνθήσεται

We live in a day in which people love to exalt their heroes. Whether it's Michael Jordan or Michael Jackson, those who worship others tend to magnify them. They do that literally when they enlarge their picture and plaster it up on large billboards — and they do that figuratively when they extol their virtues and sing their praises.

This is what Paul says every Christian should do with regard to Jesus Christ. He is our hero, our Savior and Lord, and it ought to be the joy of our lives to magnify His name.

The Greek word that Paul uses in Philippians 1:20 is the word *"megaluno,"* which means "to make large," or "to magnify." It is the verb form of the word *"mega"* — big, large, great. We know this word in the expression **megabucks** (big bucks) and in such words as **megaphone** (enlarged sound) and **megalopolis** (a huge city). I suppose we could coin an English verb to express the desire to make something big by saying, "let's megatize it." That would be the idea of *"megaluno"* — to make something big, to magnify it or make it large.

When Paul says *"...but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death"* (KJV - Phil. 1:20), he is expressing the desire that everything about him, even his death, would be a magnifying glass for people to see more clearly the glories of Christ. Actually, there are two ideas expressed by

"megaluno" in this passage. First, there is the idea of *enlarging* the picture of Christ through what people see in Paul's life and death. Not just by wearing an enlarged picture of Jesus on his T-shirt, but by exposing the indwelling Christ through all that he says and does.

Second, there is also the idea of *exalting* that enlarged picture of Christ. Again, not simply by putting pictures of Jesus on prominent billboards, but by being candid and transparent about his devotion to the Savior with the people around him wherever he goes. To "exalt" is to praise and make known that which is loved and honored.

In their translations of *"megaluno"* in Philippians 1:20, the King James translators chose the word "magnified", while the New American Standard and New International Version translators chose the word "exalted". Actually it takes both words to express the full idea of *"megaluno"*. Paul wanted to enlarge and magnify the name of Jesus, but he also wanted to expose and exalt that name. Make it big, and put it where everyone can see it — that's the idea.

So how is it with you? Can you say with Paul *"...as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified/exalted in my body"*? In everything you do and in everything you say, make Christ big and put Him where everyone can see Him.

The Sign Ministries and Truth in Grace invite you to spend

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Truth in Grace

Bits&Pieces

...Many thanks to those friends who have kept in touch during this hiatus from teaching at the College back to pastoring.

...We are still working on a possible Reformation tour to Germany and Switzerland (including the Passion Play at Oberammergau) for the summer of 2000 — that is, if the Y2K world hasn't shut down by then. So, keep the summer of 2000 open and plan to join us for a memorable time.

...Our son and his wife (Rob and Rhinda) continue to pursue their pre-field ministry to go to Slovakia (eastern Europe) as missionaries. Their support level is at 40%.

...What do you think of our new Truth in Grace logo? For our Wisconsin friends, the "G" does not stand for the Green Bay Packers!

...Dr. James Mooney is a dentist in Rhinelander, Wisconsin and Pat is both his wife and his dental assistant. They are exuberant witnesses for Christ, and they have been faithful supporters and encouragers of our ministry over the years. Thanks, Jim and Pat.

Audio Tapes



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