

Extravagant Worship Part 5

The Grace Adventure

Intro: BERLIN, Germany (Reuters) -- Tobi Gutt, a 21-year-old German tourist left Germany on Saturday for a four-week holiday to visit his girlfriend in the Australian metropolis Sydney landed. After mistyping his destination on a flight booking Web site he landed 13,000 kilometers (8,077 miles) away from there just miles from Sidney, Montana.

Instead of arriving "down under", Gutt found himself on a different continent and bound for the chilly state of Montana. He was dressed in a T-shirt and shorts ready for the Australian summer.

"I did wonder but I didn't want to say anything," Gutt told the local newspaper. "I thought to myself, you can fly to Australia via the United States."

Gutt's airline ticket routed him to the U.S. city of **Portland, Oregon, to Billings, Montana. Only as he was about to board a commuter flight to Sidney -- an oil town of about 5,000 people -- did he realize his mistake.**

Gutt spent three days in the Billings, Montana airport before he was able to buy a new ticket to Australia that his parents and friends sent over from Germany.-(Reuters. POSTED: 9:27 a.m. EST, December 29, 2006)

A simple mistake, but in Tobi's situation, it was a costly one of time and money. It is important that we don't make that same kind of mistake in our walk with God. What if we as a church were making a similar mistake, but instead of purchasing a ticket that we thought would take us to heaven, we are purchasing a ticket that has no benefit in heaven?

God has called us to be **involved in His heroic vision**, a vision that carries with it an **element of risk and adventure**. But **the greater risk that we have to be aware of is allowing our own lives to continue as it is and to believe that our ticket will somehow cash in when we reach our final destiny.**

There are many people who feel like they have a ticket but don't have a ticket at all. **Let me read to you some details of the life of a guy by the name of Paul Berry, 25 who was a project manager in Colorado Springs, Colo.**

- His parents were not religious at all. He can only remember a couple of Christmas and Easter services his family had ever gone to, but no more than five total.
- "When I was **18, my best friend invited me to church**. After that, I started reading the Bible- even bought a nice leather one because that's what everyone had. Yet, I noticed that when someone asked a hard spiritual question, he or she was often dismissed. **After two years of going to church and listening to Christian music, I was still the same person- engaged on a mental level, but making no effort to follow Jesus. I was one person at work, a different person at church and a third person with friends."**
- **Paul later met some guys who lived their Christian walk no matter where they were and he later gave his life completely to church.** (*"People You Meet Along The Way"*, Outreach, January/February 2007 pg. 140)

Grace- Grace can be found in the New Testament 116X's.

Gospels- (4X's) Jesus was born full of the grace of God already on Him, (Luke 2:40; John 1:14). And now we are recipients of that same grace.

*"¹⁶From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; **grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**"*
John 1:16-17

Acts- (11X's)

- Grace enabled the apostles to speak with great power, (Acts 4:33).
- Grace allowed Stephen, Paul, Barnabas and others to do great wonders and miraculous signs among the people, (Acts 6:8; 14:3).
- Grace extended beyond the Jews to the Gentiles through many conversions in Antioch, (Acts 11:19-23; **Acts 15:10-12-** Confrontation in Jerusalem; Acts 18:27)
- It was common to encourage the new converts through the term, "*continue in the grace of God,*" (Acts 13:42-43), for us those are words of encouragement like "*keep your spiritual growth*" and "*continue your maturity in Christ.*"
- Below is a scripture that has an interesting statement worthy of review:

*"²⁶From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been **committed to the grace of God** for the work they had now completed."*
Acts 14:26

Here the apostles return to Antioch, which was the first demonstration of God's saving grace to the Gentiles and now seems to be home base for these apostles. But something made clear in this passage is that they have not lost concept of what fueled the events that took place in Antioch and all the other places they visited, it was grace. And as a statement easily overlooked, Antioch was a place... "*where they had been **committed to the grace of God** for the work they had now completed.*" There is a commitment on our part that has to take place for God to do His part. He is powerful and willing, but He waits on us to act in the proper attitude so that His work to be completed. Our "committing" to the grace of God is knowing several things, just like the apostles experienced:

- **God wants to reach people that you may think are unreachable or too far gone.**
- **God wants to touch people as an act of His love through signs and wonders, not without calculated acts of benevolent.** Benevolence alone will exhaust you and is much more dependent on money and personnel than on the power of God. We have got to become committed to the "grace of God" so we can accomplish the work at hand.
- **God wants to mature people who have experienced His grace,** to walk "worthy" of this grace.

*"Now I commit you to God and to the **word of his grace**, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."*
Acts 20:32

- **God wants to unite people who have experienced His grace.** It may

seem like all those small groups of Christians that Paul and Peter had reached out to desperately needed each other because there were so few, we have got to understand that we connect as well, not so much on dead ecumenical activities, but through the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

- Grace continues the task of God's redemption plan no matter how broken and divisive things can become. Paul and Barnabas parted ways, but were *"commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord."* (Acts 15:39-41; Rom. 5:15)
- **Paul's Manifesto**, and it should be ours:

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace."
Acts 20:24

Romans (18X's)

- Grace enables us to take the position, (like an apostle) to call people into obedience that comes from faith. (Romans 1:5)
- Grace gives God opportunity to operate outside of the "law," fulfills legal and prophetic requirements of prophets and law. It is activated through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. We are justified freely, by this grace provided by Jesus Christ on the cross. (Romans 3:21-24; 5:15,17,20,21)
- Activating our faith on God's promises activates God's grace on our relationship as His son's and daughters. (Romans 4:16; 5:2)

God's Awesome Provision of Grace comes in Three ways:

1. Grace is the provision of our acceptance before God.

Paul Berry found out what it was like to move from a mental relationship with religion to a heart to heart relationship with God. He understood the power of God in his life and was able to make adjustments in his life that would glorify God.

¹⁶*From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.*

¹⁷*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

John 1:16-17

²¹*But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

Romans 3:21-24

2. Grace is the provision to empowers us to be an overcomer.

Nothing is quite as powerful as the loving nature of God. It gives us the opportunity to stand before God, forgiven and loved as well as allowing us to

become an overcomer in the life we are living.

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified."

Acts 20:32

Alan Chambers was 19 years old, sitting in a gay bar on Easter Sunday, when two people from his church walked into the bar and told him that God had sent them to walk out of the bar with them. He had dealt with homosexuality as a child but at the age of nine, after a teenage boy from his neighborhood molested him, he knew he was headed in that direction. In his words, **"For the first time in his life someone had paid attention to me."**

By the sixth grade, homosexual feelings dominated his life. He was raised in a Christian home and his thoughts were consumed with the fact that he was gay and that God was going to send him to hell. He said, "Every night, I prayed that God would take away the feelings, that he would fix me and make me straight when I woke up."

At the age of 18, a speaker at a Christian youth conference gave a Word that there was a young man there who was gay and had been molested and had intentions of suicide. The speaker went on to say that he wanted to talk to that person. Alan went to him after the service and here is what the speaker said, **"God loves you- no matter what."** Alan had never heard that before. He also told him of a ministry called "Exodus", an organization leading homosexuals to freedom through Christ that was just two miles from his home.

After six months of counseling Alan was still a wreck. He had not completely discontinued his association with the gay community and had feet in two places. But that definitive Easter Sunday in the gay bar, those friends...showed him that God loves us no matter what, and it's His love that will change us. The grace extended to us to overcome.

Allen did overcome, he is now the president of Exodus International (exodus-international.org). Here's the line that really stuck out to me, **"I didn't leave homosexuality because it was so bad. I left because I found something better."** ("He just told me, 'God loves you, no matter what.'", Outreach, January/February 2007 pg. 132)

1. **Grace is the provision of our acceptance before God.**
2. **Grace is the provision to empower us to be an overcomer.**
3. **Grace is the provision to have great impact on those around us and help the hurting.**

"Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith."

Romans 1:5

Paul addresses an issue that we have to learn, we have to receive the grace that allows us to take the position of an impact person, an apostle if you will. That grace empowers us to "call" people from all lifestyle, background, races and nations to come to full maturity, "continue in the grace of God," so that they can "abound"

The people who had gone to the bar to take Alan out of it were living in the third provision of God's grace. They had received grace, the apostleship to call Alan out from a homosexual lifestyle to obedience that comes from faith. ***“He didn't leave homosexuality because it was so bad. He left because I found something better.”***

Abounding Grace (Living in the third provision of God's Grace)

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

II Corinthians 9:8

This scripture is addressing the Christian who understand the third provision of God's grace. It is actually the most exciting aspect of being a Christian.

- **God's grace is a ticket, but a ticket to what destiny in our life?**
- **We want all grace to abound in us, why?**
 - **So in all things**
 - **At all times**
 - **Having all that you need**
 - **So you will abound in every good work**

When we start living in the third provision of God's grace, we have reckless abandonment toward the things of God. We are more willing trade distracting things of this life for the sufficiency that comes from God that enables you in all things, at all times in all you need. God is there when we free fall into His arms so that you will abound in every good work.

Hindrances To The Provision

Most people have experienced the trauma of life that causes them to hold so dearly onto things and money in this life that they have lost the ability to know the “full”, the abounding grace of God. Satan's tactics are so devious that we hold on to things that are nothing.

Illustration: When I served as director of Maintenance for three years I actually loved every minute of it. I love remodeling the church. I loved 15 ton unit air conditioners crashing and trying to solve all the problems that come with it. I loved being responsible for building a three million dollar facility and all the head aches that came with it. But a silly thing happened to me.

I was asked to take over the college and singles ministry at the church. I loved the idea just as much as anything. It seemed like a no brainer. My oversight called me in and told me that I needed to turn in my keys when I got around to it. It took me two weeks to get the guts to take those keys to my boss. Somehow I had attached so much worth, so much value to those keys it was like I could not let go. And they were just keys.

I remember having to punish Megan and Morgan. We had tried so many things, and you do have to be creative in doing so. We decided that we were going to take some

of the girls toys and put them up for two weeks. We took a trash bag into their room and told them that for their punishment they were both going to have to place four toys each in the trash bag and we were going to place it in the top of their closet for two weeks. You would have thought we killed their dog. They cried so hard as they oddly enough picked up toys that I had never seen them play with, but you would have thought we were taking away every toy in the house. In their agony, they would drop one toy at a time, bidding it farewell, grieving deeply over each one. We placed the bag in the top of the closet where you could see it when they opened the door and you could tell for days every time they opened the closet door, they were reminded of their loss and would express it in their grief and crying.

Holding on to “things” is somewhat confused and demented in our society. I have met men who had made thousands of dollars in their lives. They had the cars, the houses and the offices. But somewhere down the road their job became sour, their homes split apart and they lost many of their possessions. In response to that you can find them living in a small or modest house, perhaps driving a little car pattering to their simple job. They refuse to go back into that environment, but not because they are content, but because all of it reminds them of their hurtful past. They have not been healed and the hindrances of God's provision is still active in their life.

Because of Christ we have become a “better” people,

- **We understand that God's grace is the provision for us to stand accepted before God**
- **We also understand that God's grace is the provision to empower us to be an overcomer**

But few have become “abounding” people, full of contentment and sufficiency in God's grace; to have great impact on those around us and help the hurting. To fully come into God's abounding grace will make us the richest people in the world. The wealth and things of this world can not match the resources and contentment of a person experiencing the abounding grace of God. Many have been saved from their sin, but few have been saved from the deceitfulness of the things of this world has to offer. The deception of an “abundant life” without Christ.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

II Corinthians 9:8

Insider Verses Outsider

So God is able to make His grace abound to you that your can abound outwardly. At times I've experienced pressure from the inside of the church that wants to do certain things. It's not that those things are wrong, but that they cause the church to become more inward focused, keeping people out and unwelcome. **Cornerstone church should never be about who we are going to keep, it should be about who we are going to reach!**

- **It's not that you don't listen to insiders, it's which insiders you need to listen to and it should be those who have the outsiders at heart.**

- **The best way to speak the outsiders language is to spend time with them.**
- **We will not dumb things down for the outsiders, but we will communicate clearly in a language that the outsiders can understand, clarifying what the insiders take for granted. We have to understand that we have a language too. No one likes to wonder what the joke was about.**

When a church, we as a fellowship is determined to function with the outsider in mind, then the we have greater potential of impacting their city with the message of the cross and helping the hurting with the love of Christ. In other words, “Abounding in the Grace of God.” Many people who experience this grace becomes **raving returners** before they become **committed members**. They need an environment where these three levels of Grace can be activated in their lives. Let me tell you of Savannah, a freshman in college:

- “I’ve had a terrible experience trying to find a church...I went to the same church for a good three months pretty much every Sunday, and the whole time no one ever even said ‘hi’ to me when I walked in. And I really liked the church and the atmosphere, as well as what I was hearing, but there was no community feeling whatsoever. I went to church with the same group of students every time, and they all felt the same way. I eventually stopped going.”- Savannah (freshman) (*Meet The Millennials*, Outreach, January/February 2007 pg. 110)

Businesses Understand The Need To Listen To The Outsider

It doesn't matter what business you are in, if you don't listen to the customer or the outsider, you will not be in business long. When products started becoming more competitive, what separated the more successful companies from the others was a new structure in the business called, “Customer Service.” The ability to listen to the outsider and understand their need. Without knowing the “needs” of the customer, or how to provide what the customer needs by shutting down communications with them and just talking within their own business as to what they think people need, they will eventually lose all relationship with the outside world. They will fail to meet the needs of the people who they were created to serve.

It's possible that the lack of impact that we can have on those around us as a church is because we sit around and talk to ourselves. Of course this brings up many challenging questions, but what if we actually spoke the language of our community?

The truth is, the insiders have the influence. They pay the bills, hire the pastor and do much of the work. It gets to a certain place in time where it seems that this organization should be serving me, because I'm tired, limited or no available to do anything. Meet my needs. And because of the relationships, the years together and commitment level, we slowly lose sight of why we exist, “to impact our city with the message of the cross and help the hurting with the love of the Christ, and eventually become a church that no longer listens to the outsiders and is no longer a church anyone wants to attend.

Most churches that are planted were not planted focusing on who was there but who was not there. Eventually, many churches change to pattern themselves after churches no one wants to attend. The model of a church is changing, not to compromise the message but to communicate a clear message.

- There are so many **unchurched people in the United States** that if you were to put them together, according to Barna Research, they would make the **11th largest nation in the world.**
- **66% of Americans don't see the Church as meaningful in helping them discover any purpose for their lives.** The Church is viewed as irrelevant and out of touch.
- According to **UCLA's 2003 College Students' Beliefs and Values study, 52% of college students attended religious services regularly before going to college, but by their junior year only 29% still attended regularly.**

Looking At Grace, Looking At My Ticket

We really don't realize what is written on our ticket of Grace. On it you will find that it allows you to bring as many with you as you want. It is free to all. The grace that is sufficient for your journey is sufficient for those around you. You may be thinking, "I'm just trying to straighten myself up, how in the world can I help someone else." What better to help a person to Christ than a person who has been where they are and is taking the same journey.

- Research indicates that over the next 20 years, college students will be at the heart of one of the largest and impacting age groups ever to grow up in America: the millennials. Today, college-aged students are the junior members of this generation born between 1984-1988.
- Boasting more than 81 million members (Boomers have 77 million), millennials (born between 1981-2002) are confident that they'll make a difference in their world. Having been raised by parents who are still actively engaged in their lives, this generation has been taught to respect authority, and it working within the fabric of society (instead of rebelling against it like the '60s counter culture to change the world for the better. (*"Meet The Millennials"*, Outreach, January/February 2007 pg. 110)
- **"While our age group likes money and things too, we measure ourselves more by how we make a difference in the world."**- Jen Clark, 2005 university graduate.
- As you well know, **America** today is **not healthy** and unsurprisingly, neither are many of it's churches, especially in the area of spreading the good news of Jesus Christ. A disturbing national trend that is occurring right now is of the estimated **400,000 churches** in the United States, **only 3.5%** are effectively sharing the love of Jesus and the message of the cross through it's ministry. When you consider that our nation is now **at 300 million people**, then that places only **one healthy church for every 21,400 people.**

One in Ninety-nine (Luke 15)

Jesus tells us the story of one leaving the 99 to find the one lost sheep, but we may have to step away from our four hundred to find the 21,400.

Here's the response of another person when asked, **"What sparks the fire to share Christ in your own life?"**

"I grew up in a great family that attended church every Christmas and Easter if we weren't doing something else. So, during my childhood, church wasn't very relevant for

me. But I was introduced to Christ in high school. And as a result, a huge change happened in my life, and then in my family, as they came to know Christ as well.”

“So for me, that spark comes through realizing that there are a lot of people like me out there. People are looking for something. They may not be looking for it in conventional ways, but they want to have conversations about spiritual things, life and death issues and what their life is really about. If we just pay attention to the opportunities that come our way, we can share our faith with people.”

- This was Pastor Rick Warren's story, the pastor of Saddle Back Community Church and author of *“The Purpose Driven Life.”*

Invest and Invite

Most of us who **grew up in the church** has heard over and over that you need to **go out and win the lost to Jesus**. It is important for you to know that the **church is a partner with you** that if you will **invest in people's lives around you and invite them to this church**, we will continue to develop this church to be a welcoming environment where they could and would want to receive Christ into their heart. If you will **invest and you will invite, we will create an engaging culture that would make them to want to return**. Bring them here, we will raise the big questions and then you can fill in the blanks.

- Invest in the life of an unchurched person or an unbeliever and at the appropriate time invite them into an environment that is conducive to where they are and where they can get their questions answered. When you are engaged in investing and inviting, nothing will cause you to feel more purposeful or effective in your life. At the same time, your level of ownership will raise up to a new level.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”

II Corinthians 9:8

The Challenge of The Church

- God wants to pull us under His arms like a hen would cover her chicks
- God wants to restore us by His grace and renew our lives.
- God wants us to be warriors of the cross

Which one is it?

- God wants to love you
- God wants to heal your life
- God wants to give you ministry

Which one is it? It is Both!

“As a fellowship of believers, we have a call to impact our entire city with the message of the cross while still reaching out to hurting people with the love of Christ.”

- Our church is a hospital and a university
- It's a loving, healing place while still being a disciplined, serving place
- It's an intense, word by word, letter upon letter search for truth while still being

- an open, welcoming fellowship of grace.
- It's a safe place and at the same time, a war zone.

God's Awesome Provision of Grace comes in Three ways:

1. **Grace is the provision of our acceptance before God.**
2. **Grace is the provision to empower us to be an overcomer.**
3. **Grace is the provision to have great impact on those around us and help the hurting.**

Conclusion:

1. **So the first question is ours corporately, (church vote)**

“Do we want to be one of the healthy churches that God can count on?”

2. **The second question is yours personally,**

“Will you give of your time, talents and finances this year to be obedient to the call of God?”

In the areas that you have received God's grace in your life the most, the most healing, the most freedom and the most revelation, these are probably the areas where God wants to use you.

- Some of you were addicted and God's grace came into your life to restore you. You can relate to people with that pain and suffering in their life.
- Some of you were financial failures or God has blessed you with financial savvy over the duration of your life, but God has given you insight and revelation in the area of money that you could alleviate pain and suffering in other people's life.
- Some of you had mental strongholds, you had demonic bondages that kept you from the freedom of the grace of God, and you are now free, able to speak with confidence that God can heal you, restore you, give you a future.
- Some of you have dealt with depression, night terrors, physical challenges and God has come in and restored you mind, your spirit and your body.
- Some of you know what it's like to go through difficulty in your marriage and how God has turned a difficult destructive journey around to be one of praise and joy.
- Some of you have gone through the difficulty of losing a spouse through death or divorce. You know what it is like to depend on God and how to have His grace activated in your life. God is giving you opportunity to share the His grace with others.

The grace that flowed to you the most is the grace that flows through you the most!

Do Not Live A Small Life! Live A Big Life!

Satan doesn't want you to heal pain, he wants you to cause pain.

- **In the decisions you are making today, are you causing pain or healing it?**
- **Who do you need to forgive?**
- **Who do you need to ask forgiveness from?**

If Satan has his way with you you will live a little life, totally focused on you. A selfish life, where the grace of God could make it a big life.

- You will not care how your decisions will affect other people.
 - For your family
 - For your spouse
 - For those who work around you
- You will not care what you are doing at the moment will do to others in the long run. You just don't care.

When you are under the influence of self you do not think rationally.

When we are under the influence of self we don't think right, we don't repent and we don't feel guilty.

But when you come out of that, you wake up and realize how intoxicated you have been under the influence of self. You realize that your life is so much more when you share it. You realize that your life is so much more because it is about becoming an extravagant worshiper before God. And you worship God by feeling other people's pain. And the same people that other people are pointing fingers at, you don't. The same people that others are writing off, you are not. You are connecting to people that will never be loved if you don't. You see people who are hurting like you did. You see their frustrations and their weaknesses, their failures and their bondages and you realize that you have the grace of God to help set them free.

“¹ The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.”

Isaiah 61:1-3

“⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.”

Isaiah 61:4

Those who have been restored become the restorers. Those whose lives were in ruins, but God put them back together become the ones who rebuilds the ruins in other people's lives. We are obligated to love the unlovely, to care for those in devastation and in ruin. God has called us to go out and be His representatives of Grace!