

GRACE AND FAITH

Grace and *faith* are important words in the Christian vocabulary. They are at the heart of our understanding of the meaning of existence. To grasp their import is to begin to comprehend what for us life means.

The word *grace* suggests that life is fundamentally not ours to create, redeem, or sustain. Life, grace would have us know, is all about gift. We do not bring life into being. We are not ultimately responsible for making life continue. Nor are we responsible for cleaning up the mess that we bring to life or life brings to us. As much as we would like to think otherwise, we cannot redeem life. Grace suggests that all of this is God's doing. All is gift.

That really is good news, even though it probably threatens us initially. For most of us, all of us shaped by the reality of sin (that I guess is all of us), life is about us. We make it happen. We clean up its mess. We sustain it. Wow! That is burdensome. That means a lot of work for us. That means lying and living in the land of illusion. Grace tells the truth. Life is dependent not on us, but on God. That's good news. I and we can relax. The weight of the world is not on my or your shoulders.

Faith is the awareness of that truth. Faith is trusting that life is sheer gift. Faith is trusting that I do not have the ability to redeem life. Faith is trusting that my worth as a human is not mine to give, but to receive. Faith is knowing that I am accepted, in spite of all of my vices and virtues. Faith is resting not in my abilities, efforts, or achievements, but in what is given.

Bill Uetrict