

Title: **Critical Tensions of a Healthy Church (Part 2)**
Text: **Acts 8:1-25**
Date: **May 26, 2024**

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Big Idea

The church must keep certain things in tension in order to be healthy and function as Christ designed it to. In this sermon we'll see that the church must devote herself to ministering with both grace and truth and maintaining the connection between Christ's cross and our own.

1. Grace and Truth

I wonder if you realize that the apostle John was there in Luke 9 when Jesus was passing through Samaria and they wouldn't receive him. Do you remember he responds at that point? "And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But he turned and rebuked them" (vv. 54-55). John probably didn't get it at the time, but somewhere between this rebuke in Luke 9 and our text in Acts 8, John's changed. What do you think happened? I'll tell you what happened: He watched Jesus die, for him . . . for all. And so here he is in Acts 8—you noticed it right?—he's coming down with Peter to Samaria, the very place he had wanted to burn to the ground just a little while back, and now he's not calling down fire on them . . . no, now he's calling down the Spirit (vv. 14-17)! That's what God's grace does to a man. That's what God's grace does to a church. It makes you gracious. You don't build up barriers, you break them down.

Grace and truth. We often don't do too well at keeping these two together. And yet that's precisely what we see the early church doing so wonderfully here. So they have no problem welcoming Simon when he claims to repent and believe. After all, we don't know the heart and we assume the best. We hope for a brother and extend grace. But they also have no problem calling him out, confronting him, when the true state of his heart is exposed and it becomes clear he's walking a perilous path and he needs to get right.

It's awesome! Grace and truth—the two are set alongside one another in the same text concerning the same person so we can see they're not at odds. They go together in the church's ministry. In fact, you don't really have grace at all if you don't have truth, and you don't really have truth at all if you don't have grace. It's not loving to tell Simon you're all good with God when he's living in sin and en route to hell. Make no mistake, to withhold such a word is not compassion, it's cowardice. But it's also not true to tell Simon that it's over for him and that God could never love or forgive him. He does and he can. It's gracious to talk about the truth. And it's truthful to talk about grace. So the two stay together and require the other. Grace and truth. If you don't have both you don't really have either.

2. Christ's Cross and Our Own

The irony is that, anyhow you attempt to put a price on salvation, you inevitably cheapen it. Whatever price we put on it, it will always fall terribly short. Salvation cannot be purchased with money, only with Christ's blood shed for you. And your good works will never be good enough, only Christ's were, and he imputes them to your account. This is why your salvation is simultaneously free and yet priceless. It's a "gift of God" to you and yet it cost Jesus everything.

So the healthy church goes to war for this gospel. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to the glory of God alone. We can agree to disagree on a lot of other secondary and tertiary matters, but not this. If this goes, the church goes with it.

But there's another side to this tension. While a healthy church is to be uncompromisingly devoted to Christ's cross, they also are ready and willing to take up their own. He lays his life down in love for us. And, as a result, we are ready and willing to lay our lives down in love for him and others in our city and world who so desperately need to know him.



Reflection Questions

- Which side do you tend to fall off on—grace or truth? Why do you think? How does a focus on Jesus and the gospel help us keep both sides together?
- Which of these critical tensions seems hardest for you to maintain? Why do you think? What can you do to grow in this?

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Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

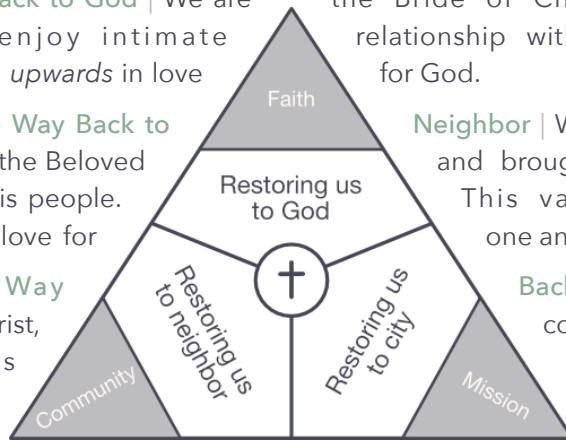
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Women's Brunch & Panel Discussion

Ladies, we will be having a potluck-style brunch and panel discussion on Saturday, June 22nd from 9:30am to 12:30pm. This event will be hosted at the Wan's residence in Cupertino (exact address will be sent with RSVP).

During this time we will get a chance to fellowship with the lovely ladies at our church (and their friends), eat some yummy food, and get a chance to listen to the testimonies of four women and their journey through singleness and marriage. At the end of the panel, there will be a chance to ask any questions during our Q&A discussion.

Please scan the QR code below to find more info and a link to RSVP!

If you have any questions please contact Beca D'Angelo at rbkvaloz@gmail.com or 669-777-8983.

Barnabas Ministry Support Sign-Up!

All Church Campout - Save the Date!

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