

September 2011

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The Edmondson's Itinerary

- Sept 18: **Salome, AZ**
- Sept 24-25: **Gilbert, AZ**
- Oct 2-Oct 15: **Malawi**
- Oct 17-19: **Prescott, AZ (tentative)**
- Oct 20-24: **Floriss, IA**
- Oct 30: **Sun City West, AZ**
- Nov 6: **Duncan, AZ**
- Nov 7-17: **India**
- Nov 20: **Quartzite, AZ**
- Nov 27: **Palm Springs, CA**
- Dec 5-16: **Pakistani training in Phoenix**



In His Grip

The Grace Embrace I: A Belated Discovery

I was 27 years old when I discovered grace. It was a long time coming. I had seven years of theological education under my belt and was pastoring a growing church. But I preached to others without really understanding my own messages. I had an intellectual understanding of the doctrines of grace but no emotional connection to the idea of a God who would sacrifice His own Son to cure my diseased soul just because He loves me that much.

I operated on the never-really-stated assumption that salvation is God's gift to me, but everything afterward is my gift to God. I worked very hard to be worthy not only of God's calling on my life, but more basically, worthy His love, His grace -- and I knew myself to be failing. My effort to pull myself up by my own bootstraps produced mixed results at best. At times I was angry, prideful, self-pitying, self-indulgent, angry, sarcastic, cynical, insecure, and...angry. I preached transformation, but often felt that I was merely posing as a transformed man. Even my holiest moments were darkened by pride if nothing else. New life in Christ seemed inwardly much like the old one without Him.

As I preached, I would listen to my own words and wonder, even as I spoke them, why they didn't work for me. This couldn't go on. I sought counsel and learned some very helpful tools for managing anger, but I didn't want to manage my sin. I want-

ed to overcome it. Then one day God stepped in and changed my whole life.

It happened on a lonely highway in Washington State. I was driving along thinking about the first chapter of Ephesians with its wonderful description of the spiritual standing of Christians before God. I could parse the Greek and diagram the whole chapter. But I kept silently crying out in a kind of inward agony, "What does all of this really mean?" I mindlessly popped a cassette tape into the car stereo and that's when it happened. The first song I heard included these lyrics, "...and though you were perfectly holy, you gave up yourself willingly. *You spared NO expense for MY pardon! You were used up and WASTED FOR ME!*" It was in that moment that the Spirit of God spoke to my heart in a way He had never done before nor has He since. "*Bob. My atonement on the cross was not just designed to include you. It was designed specifically FOR you -- for your kind of sins. It is not your work, but mine. It is an infallible work as I am infallible. It doesn't rest on you, but on me. And*



if need be, I would have done it JUST for you." I began to weep uncontrollably. In fact today, 25 years later as I write this, I am weeping again. What I had previously glimpsed with my mind and had been unable to grasp, now rested safely in my heart. No longer was grace an abstract theological concept, but a comforting and transforming relational



reality. I saw for the first time that the real struggle of my life was not the struggle to be better, but the struggle to believe. Only when I believed myself to be a new person based on an infallible work of God, could I consistently live like a new person.

When you believe that salvation and all that flows from it is a perfect and guaranteed work of God, it leads to transformation in your life. I began to operate on a foundation of security rather than insecurity. I recognized and owned the desires of my new

The Grace Embrace I:

A Belated Discovery (cont'd)

nature, believing those desires to reflect my new true self, not just some passing impulse. I was no longer the man I once was. And I could believe in this transformation because it was God's accomplishment, not mine. Before this, I had been forcing myself to serve God – dragging myself to it because I should. Now it became natural and sincere, no longer a matter of outward coercion, but of inward compulsion. A man with a transformed nature doesn't have to force himself to live out of that nature. He just needs to believe that he is a new man. The rest will begin to flow from there. Next month: Blessed to be a Blessing

Malawi: The Warm Heart of Africa

In early October, along with a team from Mission Community Church in Gilbert, AZ, I will be ministering in the nation of Malawi. This small land-locked Southeast-African country, sandwiched between Zambia, Tanzania, and Mozambique, has been called "The Warm Heart of Africa." With a population of 15 million, Malawi is home to 33 distinct people groups and can be counted among the nations that have been evangelized. The famous missionary pioneer David Livingstone first visited what is now Malawi in 1859. Never-the less, in nearly half of Malawi's people groups, Christianity has yet to become well established. There are four people groups which remain completely unreached.*



The people of Malawi are also suffering. Malawi is among the least developed countries in Africa. Per Capita Income is about \$200 per year. HIV/AIDS is rampant. Infant mortality is high and life expectancy is low. Recently, Malawi has experienced civil unrest and rioting after violence erupted during anti-government demonstrations.

Our team will be engaged in a variety of ministries during our time there including home based care, working directly with HIV/AIDS patients, counseling, sharing the gospel and training pastors and Christian leaders. As you may have guessed, my own role in the team will encompass the latter. However, there will be ample opportunity for all of us to be ministers of mercy as well.

This will be my first opportunity to minister in sub-Saharan Africa. I have much to learn and I pray that I will have something to offer. Here, as in so many places in the world, the preaching of the gospel has advanced further than the training of leaders. There are many more needs than we can begin to meet. Pray that, in addition to any temporary relief our team can offer these warm but suffering people, we may also pass on the truths of God's word that can transform lives now and long after we have come home.

*source: *The Joshua Project.*

Prayer Requests and Praises

Praise God for

- 942 prayer supporters!
- Approx. 55% committed financial support
- Support from First Baptist Church, Duncan, AZ
- Our new grandson!

Pray for

- Preparation for upcoming Malawi ministry
- Preparation for upcoming India ministry
- Growth in monthly committed support
- Open doors to present GTN in home groups
- Discernment in Scheduling

We are pleased to announce the birth of our first grandson, Elias Michael Rugen, born Sept 12 to Rachel and Loren Rugen. Praise God for His grace!



Point your mouse to www.inhisgriponline.org to learn more about Bob's ministry.



Global Training Network

Your generous monthly giving is vital to this ministry.

As we look to 2012, I see a busy training schedule ahead involving four (or more) countries with multiple trips to two (India and the Philippines) In order to cover the cost of these vital ministries, we need to raise approximately \$20, 000. Please consider the training of a new generation of Christian leaders as you plan your year end giving. Thank you.

Our ability to train more pastors is directly linked to level of monthly support.

___\$250 ___\$200 ___\$150 ___\$100 ___\$75 ___\$50 ___\$25 ___\$10 ___\$ other.

"Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account... And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:17, 19)

Support accepted at:
Global Training Network
7558 W. Thunderbird Rd. Ste. 1
P.M.B. 449
Peoria, AZ 85381



You may give online at:
www.inhisgriponline.org

(Please include a note indicating that your gift is preferred for the ministry of the Edmondsons.)

Go to the "Support" page and follow the instructions for gifts preferred for the Edmondsons. You can also download an auto withdrawal form if desired.