

'G.T.O', much more than a hot car

This is not an article about the Pontiac G.T.O, a muscle car dreamed up in the early 1960's by John DeLorean and others at General Motors. Nor is it about the car whose name they (in a sense) pirated. The Ferrari 250 G.T.O was a highly successful Italian race car whose letters of distinction were an abbreviation of *Gran Turismo Omologato*. This designation meant that it competed in the Grand Touring class. Pontiac's version was launched in 1964, the year after I was born. Learning to read took a while of course, but the three letters, 'G.T.O' have always meant power and excitement on four wheels. If you are a car enthusiast, I have likely just launched you on a trip of good memories. Stick with me for a bit longer though. I'd like to think with you about a different kind of 'G.T.O'. It too, has power and excitement.

This G.T.O stands for 'Grace', 'Trust' and 'Obedience'. Let me explain.

'Grace' is a word that has deep roots that go back, even beyond the Christian thought of forgiveness, to qualities of 'welcoming and hospitable love'. It is the kind of love that treats strangers as family and makes us feel at home. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, U.S airspace was closed to all air traffic. Canada welcomed American planes to land at our airports. That was an act of national grace. Particularly in Gander, Newfoundland, bewildered and disoriented passengers were welcomed into the homes of local people. That was a personal act of grace. The point of this is that God is full of grace to you and me. God welcomes you and me and treats us as if we were his son, Jesus. God is not cruel and punishing, but gracious.

'Trust' is what God calls us to do. But God does not call us to trust in a general way, rather in ways that are specific and in areas that matter. God calls us to trust that he forgives each one of our sins through Jesus. God calls us to trust that he knows and loves the person we truly are. God calls us to trust that in spite of oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, he really does have this world in his hands. God calls us to trust that his way of life (putting Him first, loving our neighbours as ourselves) is the best, most solid and most meaningful way to live. It is often hard for us to trust. We are alive in a time of deep mistrust for authority figures, be they figures in classrooms, in politics or in the area of religion. It is easy to transfer our mistrust of people to a mistrust of God. Our own experiences may have taught us that it is safer not to trust. The Bible's consistent message, and the resurrection of Jesus most of all, tell us that God is full of grace. It is safe to trust.

'Obedience' is 'trust with its boots on'. The questions God has always had for his people, beginning with Abraham, the spiritual Father of all trusters, are questions like this: 'will you trust me enough to follow me?' 'Will you trust me enough to stop trying to control or manage the person you love?' 'Will you trust me enough to go through this time of suffering?' 'Will you trust me enough to show you how your life fits into the story of what I am about in the world?' 'Will you trust me enough to stop stealing and start working honestly?' 'Will you trust me enough to listen to what I have to say through the Bible?' 'Will you trust me enough to turn around from living for yourself and start loving your neighbour?' The answer of obedience is the answer that dares to say 'yes' to questions like these. What will that obedience look like in your life?

G.T.O, a great way to go,

Grace and peace,

John Luth, pastor, Christian Reformed Church of St. Albert