

Grace: The Gift that Keeps on Giving 2

Central Truth:

Living a Christian life begins and ends with God's grace. Understanding the role of God's grace in your salvation gives you assurance as you follow Christ.

INTRODUCTION:

We live in a performance-centered culture. In school, we aim for good grades. In sports, we diligently train to win the championship. In the work-force, we work hard to earn the next promotion. From sports to the competitive job market, life is characterized by working hard to earn a reward. This mentality easily bleeds into our view of attaining a relationship with God. As we have already seen, however, there is nothing we can do to earn favor with God. That is why it is so crucial to understand that salvation in Jesus Christ is a gift from God through His grace—not something earned through our works.

1 SAVED BY GRACE

Attaining salvation in Jesus Christ is not earned, but rather received by His grace through your faith.

Read Ephesians 2:8-9

There are three crucial words within these two verses that explain both your role as well as God's role in your salvation...

GRACE: *an undeserved gift or unmerited favor.*

According to the above verses, what role did grace play in establishing your relationship with God?

CONSIDER THIS: At Christmas, you give and receive gifts from friends and family. You do nothing to earn those gifts; they are given to you out of the generosity of the hearts of others. In this same way, salvation is offered to you not because of what you might do to earn it, but because God gives it to you without expectation of payment.

SAVED: *to be rescued, spared from danger.*

Based on Romans 6:23 and Ephesians 2:8-9, from what are you rescued?

When you repented of your sins, trusted in Christ's death on your behalf, and confessed Him as Lord of your life, you were spared from the ultimate punishment of Hell through God's grace and mercy.

mercy—God withholding the punishment we deserve because of faith in Jesus Christ.

So, through God's grace, you get what you do not deserve (a relationship with God and forgiven sins); through God's mercy, you do not get what you do deserve (eternal separation from God in Hell).

Which of these truths regarding your relationship with God stand out to you the most?

FAITH: *belief in and commitment to something or someone.*

What are some ways in which you exercise faith within the world around you on any given day?

Based on Ephesians 2:8-9, what part does faith play in establishing your relationship with God?

What can now be concluded in regards to the different roles in attaining your salvation?

In conclusion, it is clear that your salvation begins and ends with God's grace. There is nothing you did to earn it; instead, it is His gracious gift to you. So, God's role in your salvation is to extend His gracious offer to you by performing the works for salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. Your role is to respond in faith to His gracious offer.

"Faith is the one human attitude that is the opposite of depending on oneself, for it involves trust in or dependence upon another. Thus, it is devoid of self-reliance or attempts to gain righteousness by human effort. If God's favor is to come to us apart from our own merit, then it must come when we depend not on our own merit but on the merits of another, and that is precisely when we have faith." *

—Wayne Grudem

FAITH—Whether you realize it or not, you exercise faith in many things every day. For example, when driving across a bridge, you are exercising faith in the integrity of the engineers who designed and built it as well as in the strength of the materials used to construct it. You don't exhibit faith in the bridge by standing on one side declaring, "that is a safe bridge to drive across" yet never driving across it. Faith is exercised when the declaration is made followed by a volitional decision to drive across it.

In the same way, faith in Jesus Christ is not simply agreeing that He was a great moral teacher who paid the penalty for your sin. No, faith is exercised when you cognitively understand that He is your bridge to a relationship with God and then volitionally trust in that bridge to attain your salvation rather than trusting in your own moral efforts.

2 THE RESULTS OF GRACE

Not only does God's grace give you a personal relationship with God through Christ, but it also continues to give through these different results...

You are justified (or declared right in God's sight).

In the last session, you read that God sees your righteous acts as filthy rags apart from faith in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 64:6). Left to your own efforts, this is bad news; however, through faith in Jesus Christ, you have the assurance of being right before God.

Read Romans 3:21-26.

According to the Apostle Paul, through what criteria are you made righteous in God's sight—or justified (v. 22)?

What does this justification cost you (v. 24)?

What does this justification cost God (v. 24-25a)?

According to verse 26, how does the justice of God intersect with the mercy of God?

Through His grace, God declares you right in His sight because of your faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice for your sins. As a result, the righteousness of Jesus Christ is credited to your account.

If you were standing before God and He asked you, "Why should I accept you into my Kingdom," what would be your response based on these truths?

Your sins are forgiven.

Read Ephesians 1:7-8.

In verse 8, how does Paul describe the way in which God extended His grace to you?

Read Psalm 130:3-4.

According to the Psalmist, how should you respond to the forgiveness of God?

God's Courtroom

Justification is a legal term used to describe how we are brought back to a proper relationship with God. It can be illustrated through a simple courtroom of justice...

Because of our sin, we stand guilty before the Judge. As He asks us to enter our plea, we have no choice but to plead guilty because the evidence is written all over our sin-stained robes. While trying to attain salvation through our own merits, this is how we stand before God, our Judge, because He is perfectly holy while we are sinful.

Upon confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, our lives are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, therefore covering our sins. Now, standing before the Judge clothed in the robe of Christ (freely given to us by God's grace), God's justice only sees Christ's righteousness on our behalf. Therefore, His perfect judgment declares us, "Not guilty. You are justified."

"That word justified is important. It refers to your status before God. When you put your faith in Jesus, God, the judge, hands down the verdict that you are righteous. He transfers the perfect, sinless record of Jesus to you. This is amazing grace at its most amazing. In the moment that you first believed, your past sin didn't cease to exist. You hadn't done any good work that could some-how make up for your disobedience. Yet God completely and totally forgave you. He not only wiped the record of your sin away, he credited the righteousness of His Son to you." *

—C. J. Mahaney

As a result of God's grace in your life, your sins are forgiven. God does not give this grace begrudgingly nor sparingly. Instead, He lavishes His grace upon you; therefore your response should be one of awe and reverence towards our gracious and merciful God.

You are loved and adopted as a child of God.

Read John 1:12 & 1 John 3:1.

According to these passages, who has a right to be called 'children of God'?

You have probably heard the statement, "We are all God's children." Although this is true in the sense that every human being has been created by God in His image, the Bible tells us that there is a difference between being created by God and being a part of His family. Being a part of God's family requires faith in His Son. So, faith in Jesus Christ not only justifies you before God and wipes your sins away, but it also brings you into God's family as a loved and adopted child of God.

You have strength to live a Christian life.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:10 and 2 Corinthians 12:9.

According to these two passages, what is the role of grace in your life as you seek to follow Christ daily?

Just as a relationship with God is not attained by merit, neither is the strength to live the Christian life everyday. You are who you are as a believer in Jesus Christ because of God's grace in your life—not because of anything you may do on your own. God never promised that following Him would take all of your troubles away nor did He promise that it would be easy. He did promise, however, that His grace and power would be sufficient for your every need.

You have future grace.

Read 1 Peter 1:13.

How long is God's grace going to continue to be extended to you?

A relationship with God through Jesus Christ begins with God's grace at salvation when He makes you right with Himself. It continues to be exhibited in your life everyday as God's child being shown through His love, power, and strength. This grace will continue to be given to you until the day you meet Him face to face. God's grace is truly the gift that keeps on giving for the follower of Jesus Christ.

NEXT TIME...

"Confidently Walking in the Spirit"... Upon faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit indwells the life of the believer. The Spirit gives you power for living the Christian life and gives you confidence in your relationship with God.