

424 Three Common Misconceptions Regarding Grace
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TEXT: EPH. 2:8- 10 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

INTRODUCTION:

A. Review: Grace is the unmerited, undeserved favor of God.

1. " He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. " (1 John 4:8).
2. In God's infinite love, He manifested His grace through the gift of His only begotten Son (John 3:16-17).
3. God's grace is extended to everyone unconditionally, but for that grace to be effectual and to receive His mercy your faith must be demonstrate in obedience.

B. Jesus willingly laid down His life to be the propitiation or atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 John 2:2).

C. He then taught us how to access that grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.).

D. Grace is a marvelous study, but it is not without misunderstanding -- as we note three common misconceptions regarding grace.

BODY:

I. ALL LAW KEEPING AND NO GRACE.

A. One of the primary problems of Paul's day were those who advocated keeping the law of Moses as a means of justification.

1. For example, the problem at what is called, "The Jerusalem Conference." (Acts 15:1). And certain men came down from Judea

and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2. Acts 15:5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."
 3. When the message was dispatched back to the Gentiles: Acts 15:24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"--to whom we gave no such commandment--
- B. The apostle Paul responds to such demands: Gal.2:21 "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."
- C. One of the grave misconceptions in law keeping is the failure for one to realize that the law cannot be kept perfectly (with the exception of Christ who did keep it perfectly).
1. Man is weak and comes short of the glory of God. Isa. 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
 2. Paul even told those who thought they could keep the law perfectly: Gal. 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."
 3. Legalism, which seeks righteousness or justification through law or law keeping, quite naturally is the spirit of pride, or self-glorification. If one could be justified by his good works, rather than by God's grace through the merits of Christ, then he could well glory in himself. But since salvation can never be received on the basis of one's own merits, but only on the basis of God's unmerited favor (grace) through faith in the sin-offering of Christ, then the saved person's boasting or glorying can only be in the Lord." (James Tolle)

4. Titus 3:5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
5. Paul told the Corinthian brethren, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31).

D. Even today, salvation is not law keeping.

1. If a person attended 10,000 worship services, sang 50,000 hymns, offered hundreds of prayers, etc., he still cannot earn his salvation.
2. One cannot get to heaven without the blood of Christ.

E. That was Paul's point in Rom. 4 concerning Abraham; he did not earn his justification by works or law or merit Rom. 4:2-4 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

F. When one truly understands and appreciates the grace of God, then one's love responds to it and motivates one to live in obedience to God, as opposed to the "I have to" spirit behind legalism.

1. The legalist forms an attachment to rules and forgets the spirit behind it.

2. Matt. 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

G. It is not enough just to keep rules.

II. ALL GRACE AND NO WORKS.

A. Paul apparently had this in mind in Rom. 6; the idea that obedience to God's law is not necessary.

1. Some would likely reason: if there is grace, I don't need to obey the law.
 2. Rom. 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?
- B. James in his writings dealt with the problem of those who advocated no works.
1. James 2:14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?
 2. James 2:24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
- C. Someone might be thinking, "Now wait a minute, I'm confused. Paul is telling us that we can't be saved by works, and James is telling us that our faith is dead without them. Which is right?"
1. Actually, both are. The reason that people miss this point is that they do not understand that there are two kinds of works.
 2. One kind of works is works of merit in which one tries to earn his salvation.
 3. The other are works of obedience which are an evidence of our faith.
- D. It is said the famed theologian Martin Luther could not see works in a twofold light; he therefore accepted what Paul wrote about it but rejected the writings of James.
- E. When we speak of works of obedience, we see the evidence of this in Heb.11:
1. Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice by faith (Heb. 11:4).
 2. Noah moved with godly fear and prepared an ark (Heb. 11:7).

3. Abraham went (Heb. 11:8-10).
4. Abraham also offered up his son by faith (Heb. 11:17-19).
5. Moses forsook Egypt (Heb. 11:26).
6. These men were not justified or saved by their own works, but evidenced their faith in God through works of obedience.
7. They were saved by grace, and as good as they were, they still needed the sacrifice or sin-offering of Christ.

III. ONE CAN NEVER FALL FROM GRACE.

- A. Consider again those Jews who sought justification through law-keeping.
 1. In their error they were turning from Christ to what Paul called, "another gospel" Gal. 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.
 2. Gal. 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.
 3. Heb. 10:26-31 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him

who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

- a. To "sin willfully" is to turn in apostasy; so sinning as to cut oneself off from God in a deliberate manner.
 - b. To "trodden under foot the Son of God" is to sin willingly with contempt toward Christ.
 - c. "Counting Christ's blood as an unholy thing" is to consider it as something which is common and without power.
 - d. Doing "despite unto the Spirit of grace" is to vex or grieve the Spirit of God (cf. Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).
- B. In Heb. 6, the writer was concerned for those who were Christians, and who turned so far from God that they would not turn back Heb. 6:4-6 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.
1. It was impossible to renew them to repentance; not impossible with God, but impossible for them since they hardened their hearts and turned from God.
 2. God never closes the door to them- 2 Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
- C. 2 Pet. 2:20-22 For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has

happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

CONCLUSION:

The grace of God is truly wondrous beyond words, and we must never take it for granted, nor twist its intent.