

711 What Does Grace Teach Us?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

We rejoice greatly in the grace of God, but most folks do not know that grace is not only a gift but also a teacher. A teacher? yes, a teacher! Stay tuned and we'll see how grace teaches. Today we're asking the question, "What does grace teach us?" Someone defined "grace" as God's Redemption at Christ's Expense. Certainly the grace of God is the greatest thing ever to touch our souls. But grace is also a teacher. Paul said in Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

There is perhaps nothing sadder in the entire world than a person who has been blessed greatly but learns nothing from it. The grace of God is given to us at a great cost, the price is the suffering and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured the cross so that we might be forgiven and live eternally. It would do us all great good to take a very long look at the cross of Christ and to remember what He was willing to do for us. Without the grace of God, we would each one be lost and without hope. We could only expect an eternity without the blessing of God. Because of this, we must never take the grace of God for granted. It is a gift, a precious gift, but not a cheap one or one to abuse. Grace is not cheap. Since God paid the price of His Son Jesus for our salvation, we must not act like we can live anyway we want to and still expect the love and grace of God to be ours. Grace is indeed a teacher, and here are some things it teaches.

First, the grace of God teaches us gratitude. The person who understands what grace is all about will live with joy and thankfulness. He knows that God has blessed him with salvation and new life. Paul said in Galatians 1:4 that Jesus "gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age." We do live in an evil age, where sin is rampant. Crime, war, deception, sexual immorality, addictions, anger, greed, selfishness, and violence fill our world. I don't know about you, but there are times that I long for a world that is better than this one, a country in which righteousness dwells. I long for a world where people keep their word, live without violence, live with justice, where love rules, where peace is common, and houses are safe. Jesus came to rescue us from the present evil age by transforming the hearts of sinful people into hearts filled with love and goodness. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Wherever the love and grace of Jesus has impacted lives, there is a joy and peace and love beyond our imagination. I have seen desperate people come to Lord and change their lives. God's love and grace can melt hearts and give hope, two wonderful gifts.

Grace ought to make us thankful. James said in James 1:17, "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow." You can count on God to keep His promises. Gratitude is one of the great virtues of life. William Shakespeare remarked once, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth is a thankless child!" If you are God's child, I pray that God sees how His grace has made a difference in your life. Paul could say in 1 Cor. 15:10, "But by the grace of

God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." You could see grace in his life by what he did. Can God see that kind of grace in your life, my friend? People who receive love learn in thankfulness to give love. People who receive forgiveness learn in thankfulness to forgive others. People who receive help from God in answer to prayer learn how to help others with their struggles. Gratitude changes a man from the inside so that he is ready and willing to bless the lives of other people.

Second, the grace of God teaches us godly sorrow. Anyone who thinks long and hard on what Jesus suffered at the cross for our sins begins to look at sin in a new light. While we are grateful for grace, grace makes us sorry that we sinned against God and that our sins brought punishment to Jesus who was innocent. To realize that Jesus died a cruel death and was punished so severely for our sins helps us understand how utterly offensive our sin truly is. No good person would ever want to hurt an innocent person the way they hurt Jesus. Paul said in Romans 2:4, "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" At some point in our lives, as we look at the cross, we must come to the awful realization that we put Him there by our specific sins. It wasn't just that the world tells lies; each of us tells lies. It wasn't just that the world is filled with greed and lust; each of us has been greedy and has lusted. When I think of God's kindness in spite of my sin, I can't look at the sins I have committed the same way. I am so sorry that my sins punished him and brought him sorrow. For that reason, I despise what I have done to sin against God; I am sorry for my sin and guilt in this matter. I am no better than those on Pentecost. Peter spoke to them of Jesus, "whom you crucified." My sins also led to the crucifixion of Jesus.

Paul said in Romans 12:9, "Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good." If I love God, I will hate or abhor what is evil. Loving God means hating the things that oppose and offend God. I can't keep on sinning and then pray to God as if I had done nothing wrong. God sorrow brings about repentance, a change in my heart that leads to a change in my behavior and life. Paul spoke of this change in Colossians 3:5-10, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." Putting a practice to death is a radical change. It means that one doesn't practice that behavior ever again. That sinful way of life is in the past. Grace gives us a second chance to live a new and better life—a life like the Lord Jesus lived. The saved person can say, "I'm not all I want to be; I'm not all I ought to be; I'm not all I going to be; but, thank God, I'm not what I used to be."

Now, no Christian will live a perfectly sinless life like Jesus did. Only the Lord was perfect. You and I will never be able to measure up to that. But when we do find ourselves in sin,

godly sorrow still leads us to repentance. As soon as we realize we've done something wrong, we determine never to do it again. Now some sins are easy to give up and others take some time. We are all a work in progress. God will continue to bless us as we continue to put away sin. But some people think of grace as a license to keep on sinning, since they believe the love of God will cover it anyway. Paul said in Romans 6:1-3, "What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" In baptism we died to that old man of sin. We don't need to bring him back; we need to leave him dead and buried. We can't presume upon the grace of God, by continuing to live in sin. We must change our lives. Grace is not cheap and we cannot presume upon it.

Third, **grace teaches us to do good others.** Jesus gave Himself for us to rescue us from this present evil age. If we are to become like Christ, should we not also reach out to do good to others. Titus 2:14 says Jesus "gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." God not only wants us to do good but to be zealous about it! Paul said in Galatians 6:9-10, "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Christians are known for their love and kindness to those who need help. James said in James 1:27, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." Some folks clean up their lives but don't do much to help others, while other folks are very kind but keep their lives in a moral mess. God wants us to do both, to live clean and holy lives while we care for those in need.

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised." If we love Christ and realize what His grace has done for us, we will want to live in love towards others. Jesus told the parable in Luke 12:16-21 about a man who was very selfish. He said: "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have

prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." How sad it is that many people live their lives for themselves and what they can gather together financially. They lose sight that they can't keep anything beyond this life. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 6:7-8, "we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content." Some folks are never content to give or do for others, because they are like this man consumed with themselves. This man thought he was successful, but God called him a fool. Wouldn't you hate to be called a fool by God? If God calls you a fool, my friend, you really are one. Let grace touch your life. Let it move you to separate from sin, to be thankful, and to do good to others who need your love. The closer you get to God, the more you will become like Him.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, "For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me." How sad this day in time, people have the opportunity to know God's love and be saved by the blood of Christ but do nothing with it. Paul wasn't going to let the grace that God had given to him be in vain. He determined to live a life that said "thank you" to God, that showed love to people, and that kept him free from sin. He understood what God did for him, and it motivated him to work harder than any of them. I hope and pray that you are determined to live such a life. James observed in James 2:14-17, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." A living faith is an active faith that is willing to follow Christ. To become a Christian, you have to obey the gospel. You do that when you believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, repent of every sin, confess Jesus Christ as Lord and the Son of God, and then be baptized (immersed in water) into Christ. Be baptized into His death, where His blood was shed; be buried with Him; and be raised with Him to walk in newness of life, born again. Jesus is the Savior who gives people an opportunity to live a new life, to start over fresh and pure. You see, He not only wants to save you from your past mistakes, He also wants to give you a great future of an abundant life. I hope that you will obey the gospel today. Don't put it off. Make a start today. You'll never regret giving your heart and life to the Lord Jesus. Grace teaches us the joy of being a Christian.

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