

Grace vs Works



Grace (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again sharing with you precious truths out of the Scripture that have made the difference between success and failure in my life and can do the same in yours.

In my talk yesterday I explained the meaning of the words for grace used in the original languages of scripture, connected with the way that God looks upon us. The Greek word means beauty or favor. The Hebrew words mean beauty or pleasure. And the common phrase used especially in the Old Testament is "to find grace or favor in the eyes of someone." So I said that in essence that the grace of God is the way that God looks at us. He looks at us with favor. He sees us in a different way from the people on whom he does not bestow his grace. This was illustrated by the example of Noah. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, or found favor in the eyes of the Lord. God looked on Noah in a different way from all the other men of his generation. And as a result, Noah's destiny was totally different. All the other people perished.

Noah was saved because God had looked upon him with grace or with favor.

So, that's the basic concept of grace. It's the way God looks upon us. As a result of his looking upon us things happen in our lives that wouldn't happen for any other reason. Our destiny is changed. It becomes good and prosperous instead of evil and sad.

Today I'm going to focus on a very important distinction that Scripture consistently makes, the distinction between grace and works.

And, I want to say at this point there's an intellectual content to what I'm teaching this week. It's not just emotional. It's not, quote, purely spiritual. You have to apply your mind. There's an intellectual aspect to this truth. There's a spiritual aspect. But, if you will apply your mind, if you will give careful attention to what I'm going to be saying today, then out of your intellectual appreciation will come spiritual enrichment. But here is a point where we do need to use our intellect to understand these distinctions that the New Testament so carefully makes. Probably the key passage for this distinction between grace and works is Ephesians 2:8-9 where Paul says:

> "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."

Notice there's two positive statements, one negative statement. They all go together. The two positive statements are "by the grace through faith." Always keep them together. Grace always comes through faith. And grace always excludes works. If it's by grace then it is not by works, not by what we've done. We can't work for it, we can't earn it, we can't deserve it. We have to receive it by faith. Always that contrast all through the New Testament. Grace and works are two mutually exclusive alternatives. This is stated very clearly by Paul in Romans 11:6:

> "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works: if it were, grace would no longer be grace."

In other words, if you can earn it then it's not grace. If it's by grace, you cannot earn it. Just keep that continually in mind. Anything that comes by grace cannot be earned.

Now the contrast between grace and works points us to two mutually exclusive routes to achieve righteousness with God. One is the law, the other is Christ. The law demands works, Christ offers grace. Again we have to choose. This is brought out in the passage in John 1 where John introduces Jesus as the eternal word of God made flesh. It says in John 1:17:

> "For the law was given through Moses: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

There are two alternative presentations. The law which was given through Moses, grace [and also with it truth] which came through Jesus Christ.

Now to be justified by the law, to achieve righteousness by the law, we have to observe the whole law all the time. This is very, very important. Most people don't see this. The law given through Moses was a single comprehensive system. It was all given at one time. It all stood together and Moses continually warned the Israelites, "You cannot add to it, you cannot take away from it. You've got to keep the whole law all the time."

This is brought out in the New Testament in the epistle of James where James says in chapter 2 verses 10 and 11:

> "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder you have become a lawbreaker."

If you keep 99 percent of the law and just fail in 1 percent, you've broken the whole law because it's a complete indivisible unit.

And then in Galatians 3:10 Paul brings this out also for he says:

> "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: [and it's written in the law itself, quoting from the law] Cursed is every one who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law."

Notice three important phrases there. Every one… continue …in everything. "Cursed is every one who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law." In other words, if you're going to be made righteous by the keeping of the law you have to do everything the law says all the time. You cannot keep the whole law 99 percent of that time and just 1 percent of the time not keep it and say that 1 percent doesn't matter. The 1 percent of the time you don't keep the law invalidates all the time that you have been keeping the law. You cannot keep 99 percent of the law all the time and just break 1 percent of the law and say, "That 1 percent doesn't matter. I've kept all 99 percent." The Scripture says no, you have to keep the whole law all the time. And if you rely on achieving righteousness by keeping the law but you break it at any one point at any time, then you are under the curse. The law itself pronounces a curse. They could not come under the law except by accepting that curse upon themselves. "Cursed is every one who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the law." So we have to keep the whole law all the time or it is of no avail to us in achieving righteousness with God.

The next fact we have to face is that no one has ever succeeded in keeping the whole law all the time except one person. And that person was Jesus. So Paul says in Romans 3:20:

> "By the works of time no flesh [no human being] will be justified in his sight: for through the law comes the knowledge of sin."

The law does give us something very important. It's not righteousness, it's the awareness of sin. The law can give us the awareness of sin but we are not able to achieve

righteousness by keeping the law.

So there's only one way left. If the law is ruled out then the only way to achieve righteousness, to be in God's favor, is through Christ. Paul goes on in Romans 3:21-24:

> "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe..."

Notice this is through faith. It's by grace, it's not by works.

> "...for there is no distinction..."

Between Jew and Gentile, between Catholic and Protestant, between one nationality and another. We're all alike in one point, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. If you don't accept that you are arguing with Almighty God because it's God in his own word who says all have sinned. He says it in the Old Testament. He says it all in the New Testament. It applies to Jew, it applies to Christians. All have sinned, fall short of the glory of God. Therefore, we cannot be justified. We cannot achieve righteousness by keeping the law because we've broken it. So the only other alternative now follows.

> "...being justified as a gift by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

We are not going to achieve righteousness by keeping the law. We've all failed. We have to accept the only alternative which is God's grace which comes to us freely. We don't earn it, we receive it by believing. And it comes to us in Christ Jesus.

And so Paul sums up in Romans 10:14 the relationship between Christ and the law as a means to righteousness. He says in Romans 10:4:

> "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Once you believe in Christ then you no longer can pursue the law as a means to achieving righteousness with God. The law is still a part of the eternal word of God. It's still a marvelous demonstration of God's justice and God's standards. It's still a part of the total culture and history of God's people Israel. Christ has not abolished the law in any sense of that. But as a means to achieving righteousness with God, when Christ died on the cross, bearing the sins and the guilt both of those who were under the law and for those who were not, by his death on the cross Christ finally ended the law as an acceptable means for achieving righteousness with God. And as Paul says, "We are all shut up to God's grace and mercy." We have no other alternative left. It's grace or nothing.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be explaining man's need for God's grace.

Radio Program

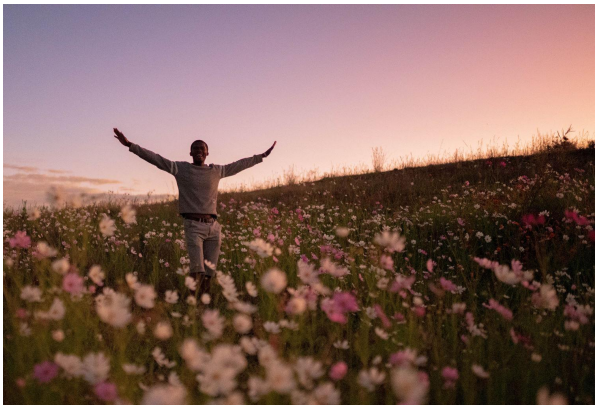
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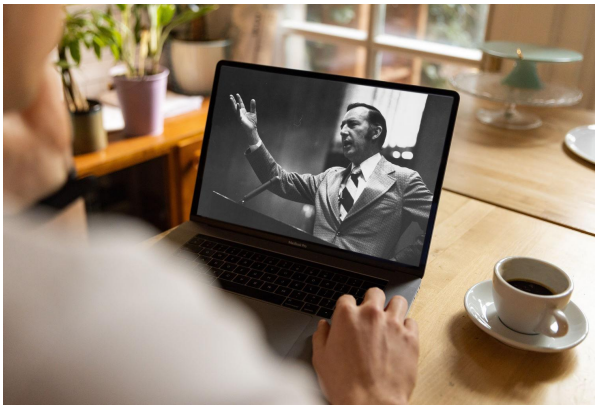
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