

Grace vs Justice



Grace (Part 4)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to get our hearts in tune for Christmas with this week's special theme: Grace.

In my previous talks this week I've explained the two alternative ways to achieve righteousness with God: law or Christ. These alternatives are summed up very succinctly in John 1:17:

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

The law demands works. Christ offers grace. And these are mutually exclusive. They're alternative, we have to choose one or the other. We cannot achieve righteousness wit God partly by works and partly by grace. That's not acceptable because the basis of the law is that if you're going to keep it and achieve righteousness by keeping it you have to keep the whole law all the time. If you slip and fall in one point or you keep it all the time except for one minute each day, nevertheless, the law is of no avail to you. It has to be 100 percent all of the time if it's to be by works and through the law. So, the alternative is grace which comes only from Jesus Christ which we cannot earn, which we cannot work for; we have to receive simply by faith.

Well, today I'm going to explain another important distinction that also arises out of our theme which is grace. The distinction that I'm going to deal with today is between grace and justice. It's very important to understand this. Let me say again as I said the other day, there's an intellectual content to this teaching which demands that you apply your mind, that you concentrate. And if you enter into the intellectual truth, out of that will come a tremendous spiritual blessing. But you cannot have the spiritual blessing until you've put in the intellectual effort needed to understand these very important distinctions that we're looking at.

God's nature is like a coin, in a certain sense. There are two sides to it that make up the whole. These two sides are very briefly summed in Isaiah 45:21. The Lord is speaking through the prophet and he says this:

> "There is no God else beside me: a just God and a savior: there is none beside me."

There are the two sides that make up the total nature of God. On the one side of the coin, justice. On the other side of the coin God presents himself as a savior. Now, justice corresponds to the law and demands works. The savior side of God corresponds to grace and requires faith.

Now, we need to understand the nature of justice. Contemporary society is tremendously confused about justice. There's a kind of sloppy sentimental idea of justice which means you pardon everybody, let off as many criminals as you can, and probably make it tougher for the victim than for the criminal. That's somewhat the way that justice is viewed and actually operates in contemporary society. That is not true justice. True justice is very exact, very impartial. Justice does two things. It rewards and protects the righteous and it punishes the sinner and the lawbreaker. And like the two sides of God himself, justice has those two sides. And you cannot do away with one side and retain justice. Justice rewards the righteous and punishes the lawbreaker.

Now, God's justice is an absolute standard. He says this again through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 28:17. God says:

> "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line…"

That's a metaphor taken really from building construction. Two things that every builder is familiar with: the measuring line or a ruler, and a plumb line. The measuring line or the ruler measures distances. The plumb line measures whether a thing is vertical or not. And God says my justice is like that. It's unvarying, it's impartial. It measures everybody exactly the same whether he be Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, of every nationality and background. God doesn't have different standards of justice. He measures everybody with the same ruler and he checks every life with the same plumb line.

Now, suppose that the width of a wall is due to be 6 inches and you put the ruler against it and it's 5 and 3/4. Well, you say that's almost 6 but it isn't 6. It might be 5 and 7/8, it might be 5 and 5/16 but it is not 6 inches. So, it doesn't pass. That's how justice is. Some people think they're much closer to being the right measurement than others. But unless they're exactly the right measurement it doesn't matter whether they're close or far away, they are not accepted.

And then consider the plumb line. We need to know that a certain wall is vertical so we hang the plumb line down and right at the bottom it's 1/16 of an inch away from the base of the wall. So, what do we know? The wall isn't vertical. And it doesn't really matter whether its 1/16 of an inch or an inch away. The fact remains the wall is not vertical.

There's just one single unvarying objective standard that is the same for every person and in every situation. That's God's justice. And if we want justice we've got to face it. That's the way it's going to operate. It's going to be very exact, it's going to be totally objective. There's going to be no element of mercy. It's no good appealing to feelings or asking for compassion. It's just exact. And in a certain sense, the exactness and the severity of justice is summed up in Leviticus 24:17-20, a part of the legal code of Moses. This is what it says:

> "If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. [no alternatives] Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution [you kill somebody else's ox, you have to give them your ox], life for life. If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him [you blind your neighbor's left eye, your left eye must be blinded. Then it's summed up in these words:] fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured."

That's justice. It's the objective, unvarying ruler. It's the objective, unvarying plumb line. It hangs down against every life.

Now, lots of people today are demanding justice. It's one of the most familiar cries we hear both in our society and all over the world. "I want justice." And obviously there are certain grounds for making that demand but when it comes to our relationship with God, friend, I want to warn you, don't ask for justice. As a matter of fact, you don't have to demand justice because the nature of justice is such that you'll get it whether you demand it or not.

In this connection I always think of a little story that I heard about a lady who went to the photographer to have some photographic portraits of herself taken. In due course she went back to check on the proofs. When the photographer handed her the proofs she looked at them a little while with her head to one side. She really didn't like what she saw. So, she turned to the photographer and she said, "These don't do me justice." The photographer looked at her for a moment and then he said, "Lady, you don't need justice, you need mercy." Well, that's the truth about you and me. We don't need justice, we need mercy. If we demand justice we can

get it but we'll be sorry we got it.

So, we've looked at the nature of justice. It's impartial, objective, unvarying and no mercy is singled with it.

One more thing we need to face up to, that the source of grace is the same as the source of justice. We cannot get grace from any other source but the source that also offers justice. Let me give you a simple example or two.

Suppose you're driving in your car with your wife and a friend in the back seat and you exceed the speed limit. And, a speed cop catches up with you and he pulls you to the side of the road and he's giving you a ticket. You say, "Well, Officer, I'm really sorry for what I did. Ah, but please, I don't need a ticket." And then you turn to your wife and say, "You know, I really don't want a ticket. I just can't afford to get another ticket right now." And your wife says to you, "Well, I know you don't need another ticket but it's no good turning to me." Then you turn to your friend in the back seat and say, "Well, I really would like mercy." Your friend in the back seat says, "I'm sure you need mercy but I'm not the one that can give it to you." The only one who can give you mercy is the one who can give you a ticket. Grace and justice come from the same source.

Or, you walk into the court room. You're charged with some criminal offense. You're very nervous, you've got your friend with you on one side, your wife on the other, and your lawyer. You turn to your lawyer and say, "Oh, I really would like to be pardoned. I'd like mercy." You turn to your wife and you say the same thing. Your friend. What do they all answer? "We can't pardon you because we don't administer justice." The only one who can pardon is the judge. The one who administers justice is the one who can also offer grace. And that's the truth in this situation we're looking at. If you want grace and mercy it comes from the one who also offers justice. God is the source and the only source of all grace.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow my topic will be "The Only Basis For God's Grace."

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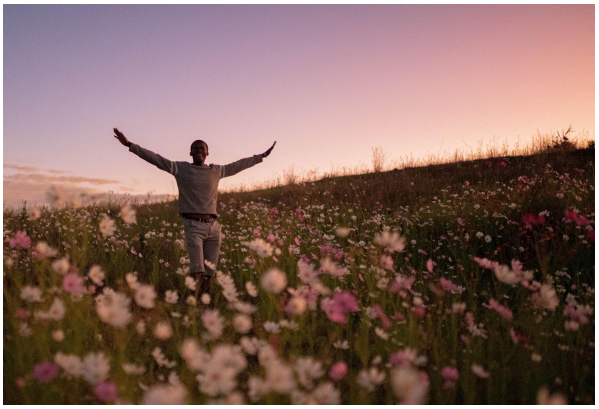

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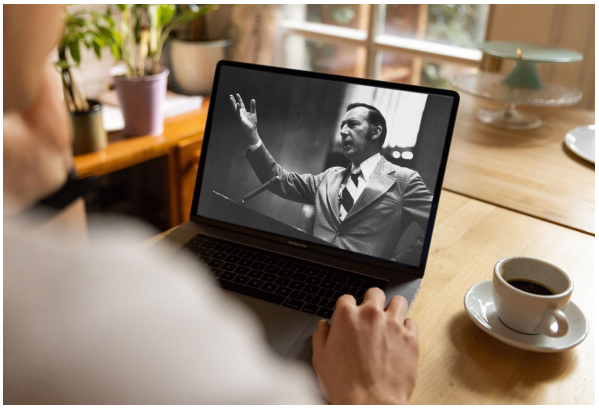

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