

The Only Basis for God's Grace



Grace (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. In my talks through this week I've explained some very important distinctions that we have to make before we can truly appreciate the grace of God. I've also explained that this requires intellectual application, that there are areas of truth in the Bible which have tremendous and deep spiritual content. But we cannot really enter into the spiritual depth until we have used our intellects and grasp the basic principles, the logical definitions and distinctions which open up the way to the spiritual depth. And so it is with this concept of grace. We have to understand these distinctions which are carefully and consistently maintained throughout the Bible.

The first distinction I mentioned was grace versus works. Works is what we earn by what we do. Grace is what we receive through faith without earning it. The essence of grace is it cannot be earned.

Then there was the distinction between law and Christ summed up in John 1:17:

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

Where law demands works and will not accept anything else but perfect works. Where Christ, on the other hand, offers grace received through faith and does not demand that we fulfill all the works of the law.

And then there's the contrast between grace and justice where justice is exact, objective, unvarying, there's only one standard, measures everybody alike. But grace sets aside or passes over the demands of justice and offers something that justice never can offer.

Well, today I'm going to deal with the only basis for God's grace. There was an event in human history which made it possible for God to offer grace and not merely justice. That even was the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

You see, as I've already indicated, there's a kind of tension between grace and justice. How can God be absolutely just

and yet offer grace and mercy. This tension is expressed in the Old Testament in a revelation that the Lord gave of himself to Moses. Moses asked to see the Lord's glory and Scriptures say the Lord came down, pronounced his name to Moses and in his name was the revelation of his nature. This is found in Exodus 34:5-7.

> "Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, [the Lord's name] the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses proclaiming, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished."

So, there's tremendous emphasis on God's grace and mercy and love and faithfulness, his willingness to forgive. But it ends with that warning, "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished."

God's grace is such that it cannot compromise his justice. In Psalm 89:14 the psalmist says to the Lord:

> "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne."

God's whole throne is built on righteousness and justice. If God ever compromised or deviated from total righteousness and justice, the very throne of God would be threatened. It would no longer be secure. There'd be no foundation for God's rule because his throne represents his rule. His rule is based on righteousness and justice. The whole universe would go astray, chaos would replace order. So, God must maintain his justice. First because it's his nature, it would be contrary to his nature to do anything else. Second, because it would produce chaos throughout the universe.

So, we're faced with this problem. A simple one to state but not a simple one to resolve. The stated problem is this: How can God be just and yet forgive sin? Very simple to state it. But only God himself could resolve that problem. And there was only one way he could resolve that problem, through the death of Jesus Christ for our sins on the cross. and so, Paul presents the cross as the solution to that problem, How can God be just and yet forgive? In Romans 3:23-26 Paul says this, we have to listen carefully. He begins by stating the guilt of the whole human race. Verse 23:

> "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Notice, because we've all sinned, none of us can ask for justice. But we can be justified freely by God's grace. Notice when it's grace it's free, not worked for. It's not earned. Through the redemption, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Then Paul continues:

> "God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement..."

The word atonement is literally "at-one-ment." The sacrifice of Jesus brought the sinner back to God, reconciled the sinner with God and made it possible for the pardoned sinner to have peace with God.

> "...God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished..."

You see, God had forgiven the sins of many in previous generations and yet his justice had never been satisfied. How did that happen? Because God was waiting for the moment when Jesus through his death on the cross would once for all satisfy God's justice and make it consistent with God's justice that he had already forgiven the sins of people from previous generations. There was a great question in the universe. God has forgiven these sins. He's passed them over. He hasn't administered justice. How could this be? And, in a certain sense, the whole universe was waiting for God's resolution of this problem. But it came through the death of Jesus on the cross. And so, when God permitted Jesus to die for our sins Paul sums it up by this, Romans 3:26:

> "He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus."

There's the resolution of the problem. God maintains his justice but he also justifies, he acquits, he offers pardon to the one who believes in Jesus because the total guilt of the whole human race has already been visited upon Jesus and expiated by his atoning death. God's justice has been satisfied by the death of Jesus. Therefore, to those who believe in Jesus and the merits of his shed blood God is able now to offer pardon, peace, acquittal, righteousness through faith in the blood of Jesus. God is just but also in that way the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus.

The atoning character of the death of Jesus on the cross is prophetically set forth in Isaiah 53:4-6 which are a prophetic preview of what was to take place when Jesus died on the cross. These are Isaiah's words:

> "Surely he [that's Jesus] took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgression, he was crushed for our iniquities: the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way: and the Lord has laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all."

That sums it up in that last statement. The Lord visited the iniquity, the rebelliousness, the sin, the whole human race upon Jesus. And Jesus paid the penalty for the race. "He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him." Because he was punished God is now able to offer us peace, reconciliation.

You know, we remember what we said all alone, you always have to have grace before you can have peace. This reconciliation between justice and mercy is beautifully portrayed by the psalmist in Psalm 85:10-11, and I'm reading from the Living Bible.

> "Mercy and truth have met together. Grim justice and peace have kissed: truth rises from the earth and righteousness smiles down from heaven."

Now, the place where mercy and truth met together with grim justice was at the cross. Grim justice was visited upon Jesus that mercy together with truth might be made available to the believer in Jesus. It's always emphasized that grace comes with truth. The fact of man's sin never can be overlooked. Nothing can be, as we would say, swept under the rug. Everything has to be brought out into the open and dealt with. Truth has to be satisfied. But when truth and justice have been satisfied then mercy is available. So, truth is preserved, justice is satisfied. And that opens the way for mercy and peace. And the result is truth rises up from earth and righteousness smiles down from heaven.

Take time to read that in your own Bible, Psalm 85:10-11. See that beautiful picture of reconciliation between God's justice and God's grace that was accomplished at the cross, then apply it to your own life.

Our time is up for today. Let me close with the words with which the apostles regularly close their epistles. "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you." That's my wish for each one of you this season.

I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be explaining how grace is received.

As we draw near to the close of this year I want to say a special thank you to each one of you who has shared with me the financial burden of this radio ministry. May I also ask you frankly to remember the ministry once more with a generous gift before the year closes. This will be a great source of encouragement to me personally and will help me to continue and expand this ministry in the new year that lies ahead.

Radio Program

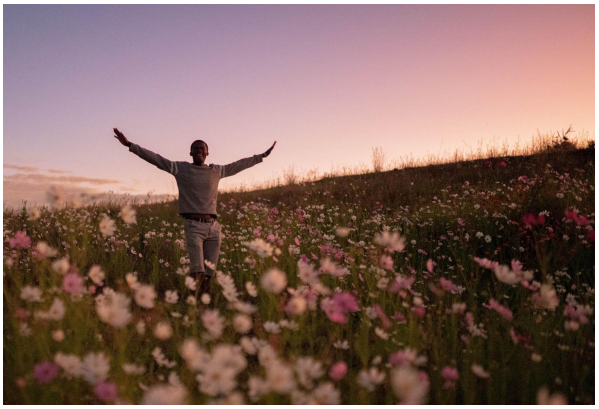
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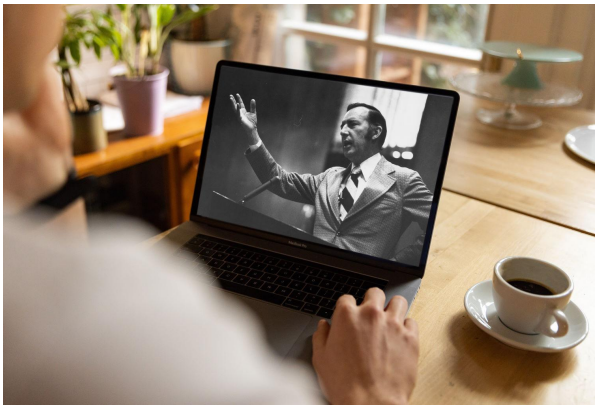
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