

God Gives Grace to the Humble



Grace (Part 6)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again at the beginning of a new week sharing with you keys to successful living which God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

I'm continuing this week with our special theme for this Christmas season: Grace. But first, let me say thank you to those of you who have been writing to me. Before I finish this talk we'll be giving you a mailing address to which you may write. It means a great deal to me to hear how this radio ministry of mine has been helping you and blessing you. So please, take time to write, even if it's only a brief personal note.

Now, back to our Christmas theme: Grace. In my choice of this theme for this season I've been prompted by my sincere desire for each one of you, my radio listeners, that this Christmas season will be truly blessed and meaningful for you. But this will depend on the attitude with which you personally approach the celebration of Christmas. If your attitude is one of true appreciation and understanding, you can receive blessings that will be of eternal value. On the other hand, if your approach is that of the majority of people today, a pursuit of carnal, self indulgence, then you may well be spiritually poorer and frustrated by the time Christmas is over than you were before it began.

In my talks last week I explained the nature of God's grace. I offered a definition: grace is the free, unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving and the ill deserving. There are several important words there. Free. Grace cannot be bought. There is no price on grace. It's unmerited, it cannot be earned, it cannot be worked for. And, God's grace is extended not merely to those who don't deserve it but even to those who deserve the opposite, toward the ill deserving. It's God looking in a certain way on certain people because he sees something in them that is of infinite value in his sight. And although there may be many weaknesses and many sins, yet God looks through all those to what's precious in his sight and he begins to move in that life to bring to fulfillment the purpose of his grace.

In my talks last week I also dealt with the contrast between grace and works and between grace and justice. Also, this

involved the contrast between the law and Christ. John 1:17, the key Scripture:

> "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The law demands works, it demands acts of righteousness consistently, all the time, without a single failure. But Christ offers us grace, something that we cannot earn, that we do not work for but that we receive by faith. Then I showed you that grace and justice are a sort of intention against one another. Justice is exact, it's precise, it's impartial, it's objective. On the other hand, grace is free and it doesn't measure, it just gives. I also said that the only basis for God's grace is the cross because at the cross God's justice was fully satisfied once and for all so that without compromising his justice, thereafter he was free to offer his grace without restrictions.

Today I'm going to deal with an extremely important question, the one essential requirement for receiving God's grace. Let me say straightaway, that requirement is humbling ourselves. Then let me add that humility is a decision we have to make, no one else can do it for us. I really don't think it's fully scriptural to pray to God and say, "God, make me humble" because I think in the scripture God comes back to us and says, "If you want to be humble, humble yourself."

Let's look at some New Testament scriptures on this theme of humbling ourselves. First of all, James 4:6-7:

> "But God gives us more grace. That is why the scripture says: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Notice two different attitudes of God. To the proud he offers opposition. To the humble he offers grace. And then James goes on in the next verse:

> "Submit yourselves, then, to God."

In other words, if you want God's grace you must lay aside pride and submit yourself. Then he goes on:

> "Resist the devil, and he [the devil] will flee from you." (NIV)

See, once we've submitted to God we're in a position to resist the devil. But believe me, friend, if you try to resist the devil without being submitted to God it will be disastrous for you. So, the first submission or humbling of ourselves is toward God.

The New Testament also tells us that we need to humble ourselves to one another. In 1 Peter 5:5-6 Peter quotes the same Old Testament passage which is from the book of Proverbs that James had quoted. This is what he says:

> "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

I wonder if you're beginning to get the message. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. And then Peter continues:

> "Humble yourself, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (NIV)

Peter there again says we have to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand but he also says we have to clothe ourselves with humility toward one another. So, God requires that we humble ourselves toward him and also that we humble ourselves towards our fellow men.

You see, the essence of humbling ourselves is that we acknowledge that we need God's grace. God never thrusts his grace on those who do not see their need of it.

There's a beautiful pattern of this in the song of praise that the virgin Mary gave to the Lord after the angel had announced that she was to become the mother of the Messiah, the Son of God. That beautiful song that's usually known as the "Magnificat" from the Latin word for praise or glorifying. We find these words in Luke 1:46-48:

> "And Mary said: 'My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed.'" (NIV)

Notice what it was that caused the Lord to pick Mary the virgin for this unique honor among all women. It was her humble state. When the angel first appeared and addressed her he said to her, "Hail, thou who art highly graced." It's the same word. So, the high grace of God was bestowed upon the virgin Mary because of her humble state.

And a little later on in the same song she continues:

> "He [that is God] has performed mighty deeds with his arm: he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but he has sent the rich away empty." (NIV)

Notice again the emphasis on the humble and the hungry, those who feel their need of God. And then on the other hand, God rejects the proud and the rich, those who are sufficient in themselves, those who need nothing from God, as they see it.

The barrier of pride that keeps God's grace out of the lives of so many often takes the form of self righteousness. I want to share with you a parable that Jesus spoke about the danger of self righteousness and how it keeps the grace of God out of our lives. It's the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector found in Luke 19:9-14.

> "To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable..."

Notice the problem is being confident of our own righteousness. He went on:

> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself [he was entirely self centered, self sufficient, self satisfied]: God, I thank you that I'm not like all other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get [that's self righteousness]. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

But actually, the Greek says, "God, have mercy on me, the sinner." In other words, I'm the one that needs mercy. He didn't look around at anybody else, he didn't compare himself with others, he just looked up at God, in fact, he wouldn't even lift his eyes physically toward God but inwardly he considered God, God's righteousness, his holiness, his justice and he said, "God, I'm the sinner. I'm not parading my righteousness, my goodness. I'm the one in need." And then, this is the comment of Jesus:

> "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (NIV)

Notice again the final emphasis. What's the key? It's humbling ourselves. What kept the Pharisee from doing that? His religious self righteousness. He was so occupied with what he thought was his goodness and his righteousness and all the good things he was doing and how much better he was than others, that that barrier of self righteousness excluded the grace of God from his life. The tax collector had no such barrier, he just opened up and received the grace of God, he was justified, he was acquitted, he was accepted by God.

So, let me urge each one of you, be on your guard against that barrier of self righteousness. Don't come to God on the basis of all your goodness and your righteousness and your religion because you will not be accepted.

I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll continue with this theme on how to receive God's grace.

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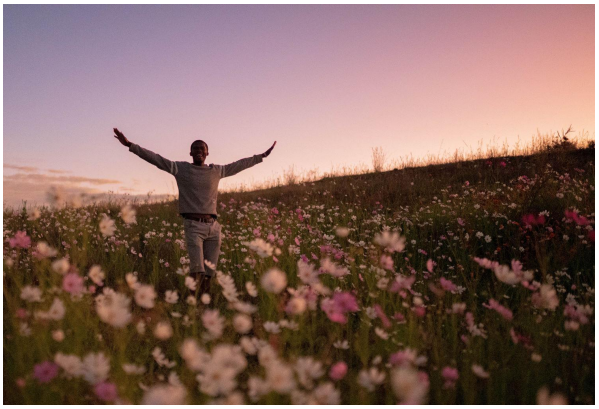

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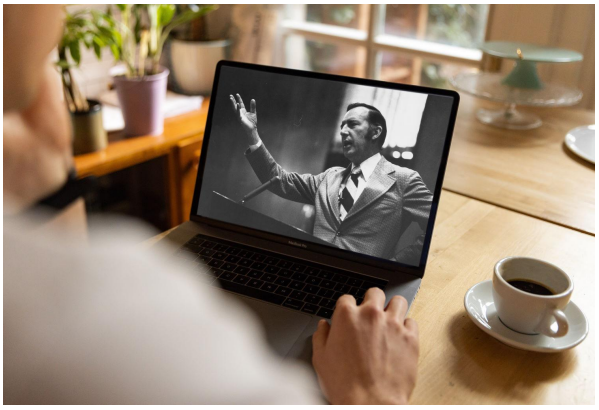

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