

Learning to Rely on God's Grace



Grace (Part 8)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as I continue to share with you on our special theme summed up in one beautiful word of measureless meaning: Grace.

In my talk yesterday I shared with you on the miraculous transaction that opens up our lives to the fullness of God's grace, the transaction of receiving Christ. I pointed out that actually there are two aspects to this transaction: the first negative, the second positive. The negative one is the one that always surprises religious people. It consists in two plain words: stop working. To him who does not work, his faith is credited to him as righteousness. So, the first thing you have to do is stop trying to earn God's grace because God can never give it to you on that basis. Because, it's a false basis and God is a God of truth. You never will earn it. That's the negative.

The positive is receiving him, Jesus. "As many as received him," John says, "he gave them the right to become the sons of God." And then it says, "In him dwelt grace and truth, and we've received of his fullness grace for grace." In other words, once we've received Jesus into our lives and yield to him, then for every problem there's a corresponding grace in Jesus. The problem of timidity is taken care of by the grace of Jesus' courage. The problem of anger is taken care of by the grace of Jesus' gentleness. The problem of lust by the grace of Jesus' purity. In other words, in place of our problem there is a grace of Jesus which is manifested forth out of our lives as we receive him and then yield to him.

Today I'm going to explain what follows after this initial transaction, how we have to learn to rely on God's grace in our daily living. And I think for most of us that has not been an easy lesson, learning to rely on God's grace. Our temptation always is to begin in God's grace, get a little bit pleased with ourselves and think we're doing fine and we can handle this, now I'm really mature. Then, without realizing it we cease to rely on God's grace and what happens? We're in trouble because we're back again in our own carnal nature with all its inadequacies and failures. So, I want to suggest to you three simple, successive steps that help us to keep relying on God's grace.

Step one, affirm Christ living in you. There's a beautiful pattern of this in the words of Paul in Galatians 2:20:

> "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by the faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (NIV)

So, I've been crucified with Christ, I'm no longer alive. It's Christ now living in me. I don't meet life's problems as my old self, I meet life's problems as a person in whom Christ is living. He has become my life. You need to affirm that, you need to keep affirming it. Every time you're under pressure and you think you can't handle it, you say, "It's not I who live but Christ who is living in me." It's very important that we say it with our lips, with our mouth, that we actually verbalize our faith. That's what's called in the Bible confession, saying the same thing with our mouth as the Bible says and as we believe in our heart. Don't just believe it in your heart, say it with your mouth.

Then the second step is a negative one. Put no confidence in the flesh. Again, I'll quote the words of Paul in Philippians 3:3:

> "For it is we who are the circumcision [and I think you could say the people of God], we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh." (NIV)

There was a tremendous issue in Paul's day of circumcision or not circumcision. I don't think we need to get involved in that. But, the people who called themselves the circumcision, they regarded themselves as the people of God, the people who had it all. Paul says that really isn't the way it is. He says this is the mark of the true circumcised people of God. And he gives three marks. We worship by the Spirit of God, we're not bound to some earthly place of worship because our worship is in Spirit and in truth as Jesus said. Second, we glory or we exult or we boast in Christ Jesus. We don't boast of our own righteousness, we don't boast of our parentage, of our denomination, of our good works, of our baptismal certificate, of our confirmation attestation. But, we boast in Christ Jesus. And thirdly, we put no confidence in the flesh. We deliberately say that we do not rely on our own ability, our own strength or our own righteousness.

Paul goes on in that passage to say, "If anybody could have relied on the flesh it would have been me." He said, "I was of the people of Israel, a descendant of Abraham, tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day in regard to the keeping of the law faultless." But he said, "I have renounced confidence in all of that because it can't do for me what the grace of God can do."

You see, in a certain sense, God is jealous of his grace. If you want his grace you've got to rely on his grace entirely. You cannot mix grace and works. That's a principle that runs through the New Testament. So it's important that you say I don't rely on my own good works, I don't rely on my own ability, I don't rely on my denomination, my church, whatever it may be. I rely on the grace of God in me.

Then the third step which goes very closely with that, rely on Christ's all sufficiency. Again I'm going to quote Paul from a little further on in Philippians. Philippians 4:13:

> "I can do everything through him who gives me strength." (NIV)

"I can do everything." Is that conceited, is that proud? No, because of the words that follow. "Through him who gives me strength." He's already affirmed it's not I who lives, it's Christ who lives in me. And now he says with Christ living in me I can face every situation, every problem, of course, within the will of God. Wherever God places me I can handle the situation because it's Christ in me who gives me the strength. I can do everything.

Let me suggest that you don't keep talking about your failures and your inabilities because you've renounced them. You're not relying on them so don't keep bothering about them. Be positive in what you say. I can do everything through Christ in me who gives me the strength.

Let me just sum up for you those three successive steps once more. First, affirm Christ living in you. Second, put no confidence in the flesh, in what you are by nature. And third, rely on Christ's all sufficiency. Keep focusing on the positive, keep focusing on Jesus. Don't go back even to your own failures because when you talk about your own failures it really indicates that you were, to some measure, trusting in your own ability. Renounce them both.

I want to close this talk today by sharing with you briefly two ways to guard against discouragement. One of the devil's strongest weapons against most of us is discouragement. When we get discouraged then he can do almost anything he wants with us. And so, if you should be discouraged at any time or be tempted to be discouraged, let me offer you these two words of encouragement.

First of all, when we are weak we are strong. Let me read the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10:

> "God said to me [to Paul], My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore [Paul goes on] I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (NIV)

So, when you feel weak don't be discouraged. In a certain sense, it's good to feel weak. Why? Because when you feel weak you're going to rely on the grace of God.

As a matter of fact, God's grace is more easily manifested in those areas of our lives where we see our weakness than it is in those areas where we think we can handle the situation by ourselves. So, sure, there will come times when you feel so weak, so incapable. Don't worry. Don't give up. Just rely all the more on the grace of God because God's grace is offered to the weak. Just say as Paul said. "All right, I'm weak. That's true. But when I am weak, then I am strong."

And secondly, if you fail don't get discouraged. Because, our faith is still credited as righteousness even when we fail. Let's go back to Romans 4:5:

> "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited to him as righteousness." (NIV)

Even when you're not doing the right thing, if you don't give up believing and trusting God your faith is still credited to you as righteousness. It's a credit, it's not something you actually have but it's a credit.

Let me take a little parable from contemporary culture. Today so many things that we buy we buy with a credit card. We don't have the cash but we offer the credit card. Well, God has made his credit card available to you through your faith. So, when you can't face the situation and you fail, just stretch out the credit card and say to the devil or whoever it is, "My faith is still credited to me as righteousness. God accepts responsibility for me even the way I am."

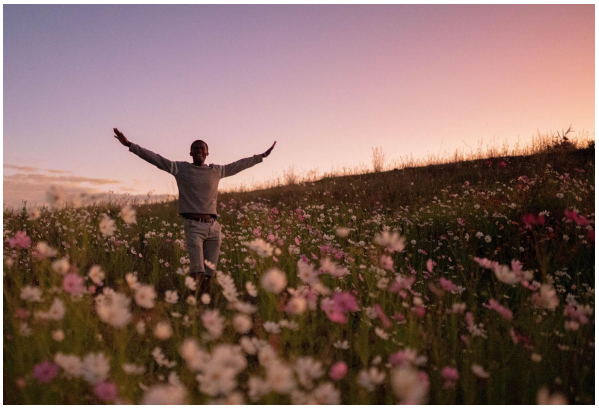
I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll speak on making room for God's grace.

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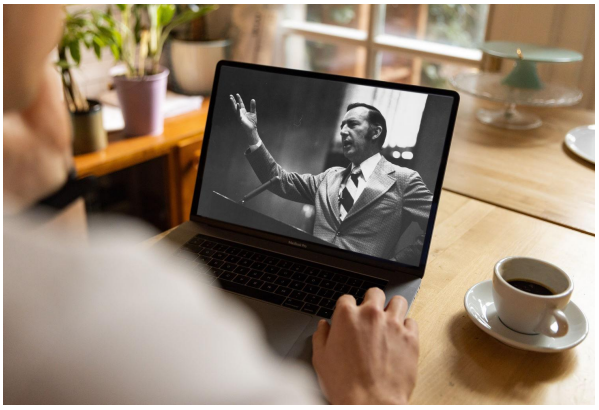
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