

Making Room for God's Grace



Grace (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue to explore together the riches of our theme: Grace.

In my two previous talks I've shared with you on two related aspects of this theme. First of all, how to receive God's grace, the initial transaction. And second, learning to rely on God's grace in daily living. Let me say they have to come in that order. First of all, we have to receive God's grace in Jesus by a definite transaction, a new birth. And then after that in daily living we have to learn to rely on God's grace.

Some key Scriptures that we studied were the following: John 1:12-13:

> "But as many as received him [Jesus], to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (NASB)

See, the key transaction is receiving him, Jesus. It's not going to church, it's not saying prayers, it's not joining the church, it's not turning over a new leaf. There are all sorts of substitutes that the human mind is involved but they're not effective. The only thing that's effective is receiving him, Jesus. And when we receive him a new birth results. Not a natural birth but a spiritual birth, a new kind of life comes forth within us.

Then a little further on in the same first chapter of John's gospel, verse 16, John writes:

> "For of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." (NASB)

In other words, once we've received Jesus then for every grace in Jesus the corresponding grace can be manifested in our lives. The grace of Jesus takes the place of our weakness. His courage takes the place of our timidity, his purity takes the place of our lust. His gentleness takes the

place of our anger, and so on. It's grace for grace.

Then with regard to learning to rely on the grace of God in daily living I quoted Philippians 4:13 where Paul says:

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

The key is reckoning on the strength of Jesus to replace our weakness. Paul even said in another place, "When I'm weak, then I am strong." In other words, when I see my own weakness then it's easier for me to make room for the corresponding grace of God. But when I think I can handle the situation by myself then I'm liable to get into trouble.

Today I'm going to take this theme one step further. I'm going to speak about making room for God's grace. This requires overcoming one great barrier, our self life. As long as we seek to maintain our old self life there really is no room for God's grace to be seen in us.

In this respect the human life is rather like a section of film in a camera. It's only designed for one exposure. So, on that section of negative in which self has been exposed it's really futile to try to bring forth the image of Jesus. What the new birth does is give us a new, clean section of negative and on that section there's room for a true, accurate representation of Jesus. But don't try and superimpose Jesus on the negative that still has the old self on it because all you'll get is a very blurred image in which nothing will be clear.

This truth was already implied in a passage that I quoted yesterday from the writings of Paul where he says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me." I have to accept my own death before the life of Jesus becomes effective in me.

Today I want to illustrate the same principle from another passage in Paul's writings, 2 Corinthians 4:5-6. Paul says this:

> "We do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, Light shall shine out of darkness, is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (NASB)

That is really a very remarkable statement when you consider who said it and in what situation. Paul, the proud former Pharisee, a very self righteous Jew, was writing to the Corinthian Christians and he says, "We are your bond servants [your slaves it says in Greek] for Jesus' sake." You need to think what kind of people these Corinthian Christians had been before you fully evaluate what's involved in that statement. Paul reminds them in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, this is what he says to these same people:

> "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were." (NIV)

What kind of people? Let's go through the list for a moment and see what kind of people Paul was writing to. People who had been sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers. To that group of people this proud, self righteous Pharisee wrote, "We are your bond servants, your slaves, for Jesus' sake." If that isn't the grace of God I don't believe there's any other way that a man like Paul could ever have been changed to that extent. His own religious practices would never have achieved it. It took the supernatural, sovereign grace of God to bring about that kind of change in a man like Paul that he who had been so self righteous would come to the place where he would make himself a servant to people who before his encounter with Jesus he wouldn't have even wanted to walk on the same side of the street with. He would have removed the hem of his robe from them and yet here he is saying to these same people, "We're your slaves, we're here to serve you, we just want to do you good."

Notice the three steps that brought Paul to this place of grace. They're all contained in the words I've read. The first is the denial of self. "We don't preach ourselves." Not ourselves. The second is acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus. "Christ Jesus as Lord." And then, "ourselves your slaves." See, that's the key. Let's go through it quickly again. Not ourselves, the denial of self life. Second, Christ Jesus the Lord, the acknowledgment of the total Lordship of Jesus in every area of our lives. And third, this makes us your bond servants, your slaves. The grace of God has changed us so totally that we will do gladly anything we can to help you people taste the grace that we've experienced.

Paul goes on to emphasize that this miraculous grace of God is always contained in earthen vessels so that we always remain continually dependent on grace. This is how he continues in 2 Corinthians 4:7-12:

> "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you." (NASB)

That last short sentence is very, very significant. "Death works in us, but life in you." We cannot become channels for the life and the grace of Christ until death has worked in us, until we deny ourself, until we've seen that old self as crucified on the cross with Christ, until we can say as Paul had said, "I am crucified with Christ. I've come to the end of my own life, I've shared that shameful death with Jesus on the cross. Now it's not I who live." Once we've come to the end of ourselves and our own sufficiency and our own righteousness and our own strength and that's all dead, then the life of God flows through us to others. We become channels of divine supernatural life and grace.

In my own experience in many, many years of ministry I've learned that usually the most successful results in my ministry come when I'm most inconvenienced, when I'm most under pressure, when I would most gladly be doing something else. Because, it's always through the death of self that the life of Jesus can be manifested. So, as you go through the days that we're in just now, just continually remember that you're just an earthen vessel. Don't be upset by pressures, by problems, by trials. They're bound to come. But they're just a way of reminding you that it's not you who is living but Jesus who is living in you. You have this treasure in an earthen vessel. It's a weak vessel but then remember that God's strength is made perfect in that weakness. It's all designed to keep you relying more and more on the grace of God.

I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow my theme will be boasting of grace alone.

Radio Program

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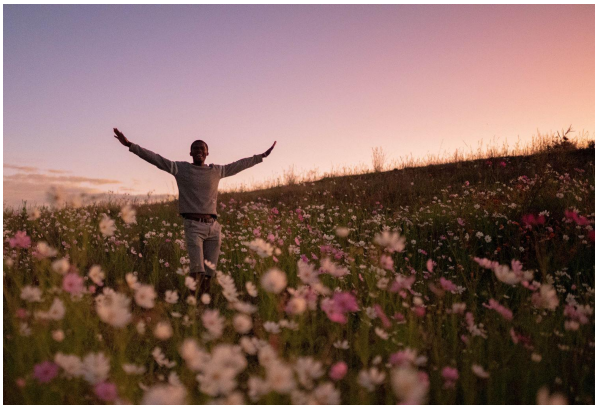

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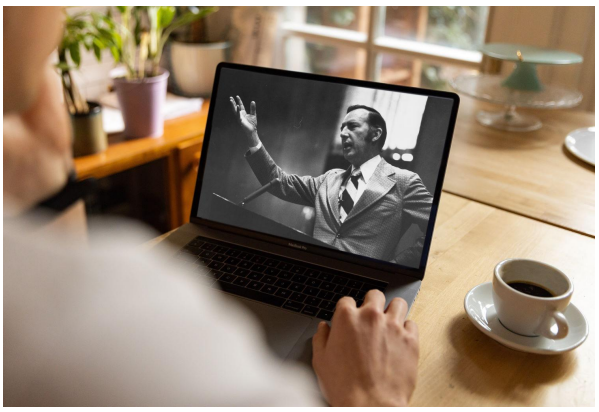

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