

Boasting of Grace Alone



Grace (Part 10)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week.

In my talk yesterday I spoke about making room for God's grace and how this necessitates overcoming the great barrier of the self life. I illustrated this from the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:5-6:

> "For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond servants [or your slaves] 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)

Those last words "light shall shine out of darkness" that Paul quotes there from Genesis 1 really are a beautiful summation of grace. There's the darkness of our human life, our sin, our helplessness, our hopelessness. Nothing to commend us, nothing we can do to help ourselves. And in that darkness God commands the light of his grace to shine out of the beauty of the face of Jesus. I already read earlier that scripture unto those who sat in the region and shadow of death, light has sprung up. For me, that's the essence of Christmas. I don't think primarily of a little baby in a crib but I think of God's light in Jesus Christ shining into the infinite depths of human darkness, dispelling that darkness and bringing light and life and hope and peace. You remember we said earlier there's never peace without grace. It's always grace first and then peace.

Going back to Paul's words there we saw the key to this marvelous transformation by which this proud, self righteous Pharisee was willing to be a bond servant of people he wouldn't have even spoken to before he met Jesus. It's summed up in three stages. First, not ourselves. Second, Christ Jesus the Lord. And then ourselves, your bond servants for Jesus' sake.

Today I'm going to show you how the grace of God leaves no room for boasting, except about the grace of God. That's the only theme that we can boast about if we're living in the

grace of God. We've nothing left of our own goodness or our own righteousness or our own wisdom to boast about. Paul goes through this pretty carefully in various passages of the New Testament. In Romans 3:27-28 he says:

> "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded."

In other words, there's no room for it.

> "On what principle? [Why is boasting excluded?] On that of observing the law? No..."

If we had observed the law perfectly we'd have something to boast about. But on what principle?

> "...but on that of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law."

If we're justified by faith without keeping the law then we have nothing to boast of. Boasting is excluded by the principle of faith.

And then in the next chapter of Romans, Romans 4, Paul goes on to apply this specifically to Abraham. It was very important for Paul that he could prove that this was the principle on which Abraham was accepted with God because Abraham was the father of the whole race of Israel and his experience was a key in which they could understand their own experience. So Paul is very careful to point out that Abraham had nothing to boast about. He too was justified by faith without works. This is what he says, Romans 4:1-3:

> "What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about, but not before God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (NIV)

So, like all the rest of us, indeed, he's our spiritual father. Abraham received righteousness from God not on the basis of keeping any law or of his good works but simply because he believed in God's grace. And, on the basis of his faith he was credited with righteousness. He received that tremendously wonderful credit card that I spoke about last time. When we aren't doing exactly what we ought to do, our faith is still credited for righteousness. We can't pay in the cash of good works but we can extend the credit card of righteousness.

Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians what they had been and then points out the same lesson: there isn't any room left for boasting. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31:

> "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called [when you first heard the gospel]. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth."

There are three main things which cause men to trust in themselves. Wisdom or education, influence, social or political, and noble birth. Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that most of them couldn't boast on any of those three scores. But he goes on:

> "God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are..."

That's an amazing list of what God has chosen. He's chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the lowly things, the despised things, and even things that are not, just to bring to nought all the things that are. And Paul gives the reason:

> "...so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God, that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

Paul says we have nothing of ourselves. It's not our own righteousness, it's not our own holiness, it's not our own redemption. But in the wisdom of God, Jesus Christ has been made to us all these things. It's his grace in us that produces these things.

And then Paul sums that passage up:

> "Therefore, as it is written [and he's quoting from the Old Testament], Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (NIV)

We have no other thing to boast about in time or in eternity.

And then again in Galatians 6:14, one of the most amazing statements:

> "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to

> me, and I to the world." (NIV)

If you knew the ancient world of Paul's day, if you knew what the cross stood for, it was the ultimate emblem of shame, of degradation. A Roman citizen could not be crucified, he had to be executed in some other way because it was too shameful and the Roman Empire didn't want to downgrade Roman citizenship. So, there was a law that a Roman citizen could not be crucified. That's why Paul was not executed by crucifixion, because he was a Roman citizen. It was the ultimate in shame. Paul says the most shameful thing in our total culture is the only thing I want to boast in. The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ because that's how the grace of God was made available to me. Not in any other way but through the cross.

In line with this theme of glory and boasting, all the glory throughout eternity goes to God's grace. Isn't that a beautiful thought? Let me just quote some beautiful words from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:5-6:

> "He [that is God] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved." (NASB)

So that everything that God is doing to us is ultimately designed to bring praise to the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed. In other words, Paul reminds us that grace was free, it was not earned, it couldn't be worked for.

Let me read another passage from the same 1st chapter of Ephesians. Just a little further on, the emphasis again is on God's grace and God's glory. Verses 11-12:

> "In him [that's Jesus Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to his purpose who works all things after the counsel of his will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of his glory." (NASB)

In other words, all is destined to bring praise and glory to God.

And then in the 2nd chapter of Ephesians Paul goes on again with the same theme. Ephesians 2:4-7:

> "But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) [notice the emphasis on grace], and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come he might show the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (NASB)

That's an astonishing statement, isn't it? God takes the lowest, the least worthy, the weakest. He bestows his grace upon them, he transforms them, he raises them up with Christ, he seats them with Christ. And his ultimate purpose is that through all eternity he will demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in his kindness towards us. That's going to be the theme of eternity. It's staggering, the extent of God's grace. God takes the lowest and lifts them to the highest. But always with the purpose that all the glory should go to his grace and none of it to ourselves. So, let's remember God's grace is always for God's glory.

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

I'll be back with you again next week at this same time, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll continue with the theme of grace. I'll be explaining the practical results of God's grace in our lives.

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.

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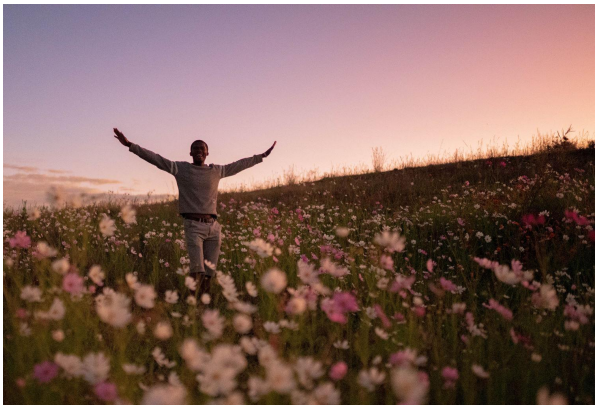
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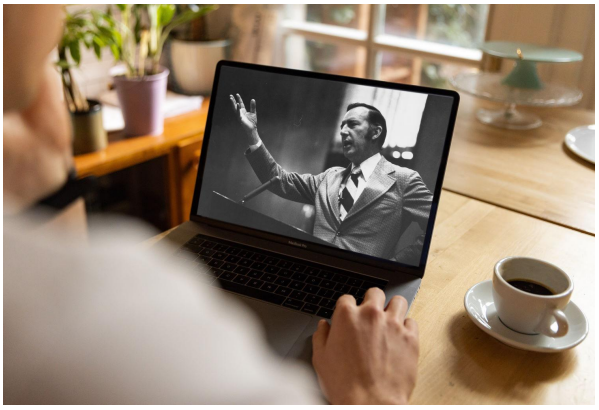
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