

Grace is a Presence



Grace (Part 11)
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.

Over the Christmas season I've been sharing with you on the theme of Grace, and now that we stand at the threshold of a New Year, I believe it's appropriate for me to continue with the same theme. If you can understand the truths that I'll be sharing with you this week, truths about grace, they will enable you to face the New Year with greater assurance and confidence than ever before.

But first, let me say thank you to those of you who've 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 theme: Grace. To begin with, I want to go back for a moment to a passage that I referred to earlier in my talks on this theme. It's the Levitical blessing of the priests that's found in Numbers chapter 6, verses 25 and 26. That's not the complete blessing. It's the latter portion of it. It goes like this:

> "The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace." (NIV)

Now in the middle of that passage we have the phrase "the Lord be gracious to you." That means "the Lord extend or exercise His grace toward you, His free unmerited favor." And we noted before, but it's important to keep it in mind, that this is directly connected with the Lord's face. "The Lord make His face shine upon you, be gracious to you... the Lord turn His face toward you." In other words, the Lord's favor, in some sense, is the way He looks at us. Sovereignly He looks upon us with favor. And when He begins to look upon us with favor, we're singled out. Our destiny has changed. We become different from the people around us.

A good example, one which I have already referred to is that of Noah. It says, "Noah found grace, or favor, in the eyes of the Lord." And as a result of the Lord looking upon Noah in that way, Noah's whole destiny was changed. It was different from that of all the other men of his generation. Because the Lord had looked upon him, the Lord had bestowed His favor, His grace upon him.

And then continuing with that Levitical blessing, after those words, "the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you," we have the culmination, "give you peace [shalom]." So we understand that peace is always the outcome of grace. And indeed apart from God's grace we can never really know true peace.

But I want you to see now that grace is more than just a mere attitude of God. When God looks upon us with His favor He transmits something to us. We are surrounded with a different atmosphere. We are protected. It's not just a kind of legal transaction, but it's a real impartation. God's eyes look upon us and transmit His love, His mercy, above all His presence. The grace of God brings the presence of God into our lives in a very real way. There's something different in the atmosphere around us.

I said once, it's like on a very hot day everybody is driving around in cars that are not air conditioned. And we have an air conditioned car. So while everybody else is hot and perspiring, we're cool and restful because we have a different atmosphere. And that's how God's grace is. It surrounds us with a different atmosphere.

This explains many phrases that are used in the New Testament. Phrases, which apart from this we couldn't fully understand. For instance, I've already said that grace and peace was the normal greeting that opened a New Testament epistle or letter. Let me give you just one or two examples of this. Romans chapter 1 verse 7, the opening:

> "Grace and peace to you from God our father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (NIV)

Something comes to us. It comes to us from God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son. It's His favor and it brings His peace, His wholeness, His completeness, His all-sufficiency.

And then at the end of Romans, Romans chapter 16 verse 20, Paul puts two things together which are very significant. He makes a statement, a bold statement of faith, he says:

> "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. [And immediately he goes on to say…] the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." (NIV)

In other words, what's going to make them victorious over Satan is God's grace, His favor, His presence with them. And I want you to think that way as you face this New Year. If the grace of God is going to be with you then you too will be victorious over Satan and over the forces of evil.

And then in another letter, the second epistle of Paul to Timothy, there's a similar type of beginning and ending. In 2 Timothy chapter 1 verse 2:

> "To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord." (NIV)

Notice, Paul there adds one more blessing. It's not just grace and peace, it's grace, mercy and peace. But we see again that always grace comes first. Out of grace flow all these other blessings. And then at the end of that epistle, 2 Timothy 4 verse 22, Paul says he closes:

> "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." (NIV)

It's like the presence of the Lord is His grace with us. And Paul speaks about grace as something actually that actually accompanies us. It's present with us. "Grace be with you." And then again, Paul's own testimony as he gives it in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 10 about his labors for the Lord.

> "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." (NIV)

It's interesting that the word "grace" occurs three times in that one verse. "By the grace of God I am what I am… His grace to me was not without effect…" And then he says, "I work harder than all of them…" and then he kind of corrects himself, "yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." And so when Paul is explaining his success in Christian ministry, he doesn't claim it for himself, but he claims it for the grace of God. But he says, "The grace of God was with me, like a presence, like something that followed me, that overshadowed me, that kept company with me wherever I went and labored for the Lord."

Now I want to give you two beautiful pictures of grace taken from the Old Testament. The first from the book of Psalms and the second from the book of Proverbs. The first one in Psalm 5 verse 12:

> "For surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor [or your grace] as with a shield." (NIV)

You see, that brings out so clearly that the grace of God is not just a theological concept. But it's a real something that's with us. It protects us, it enfolds us, it keeps the forces of evil at bay, it drives back the evil forces that oppose us. God surrounds the righteous with His favor as with a shield. So as you face this New Year, I want you to think of yourself as facing it with a shield all around you that protects you from harm and danger, spiritual, emotional, physical, even financial. What are you protected by? The grace, the favor of God that's all around you like an invisible shield. An invisible shield that keeps germs away, that keeps away sickness. There's no evil force really that can penetrate that shield of the grace of God if you can just receive it by faith and reckon on it and believe it's with you.

Then the second picture in Proverbs 16 verse 15:

> "In the light of a king's face is life, And his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain." (NASB)

Now we're talking about a king. And remember that Jesus is not just a king, He's the King of all kings. "In the light of His face is life..."

When He lifts up His face upon us and looks upon us with favor, that's life.

And then it goes on: "...his favor [the favor of a king] is like a cloud with the spring rain." We have to understand that in the land of Israel, rain is the greatest blessing. It's not something we don't want. It's something we cry out for. And the most blessed rain of all, the one that brings the greatest fruitfulness, the surest prospect of a good harvest, is the spring rain or the latter rain. So a cloud that brings the spring rain is something that people long for. It's the assurance of blessing, of fruitfulness of God's abundant provision for His people. And God's favor is like that cloud.

So as you move into the New Year just envisage yourself surrounded by a cloud that's like a cloud of spring rain, the cloud of God's favor overshadowing you and protecting you.

Well, our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time sharing another aspect of God's amazing grace.

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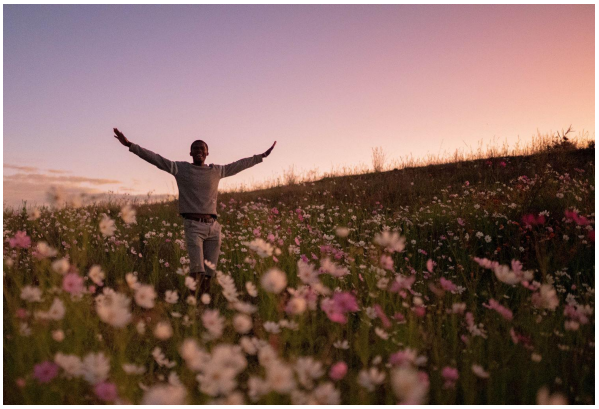

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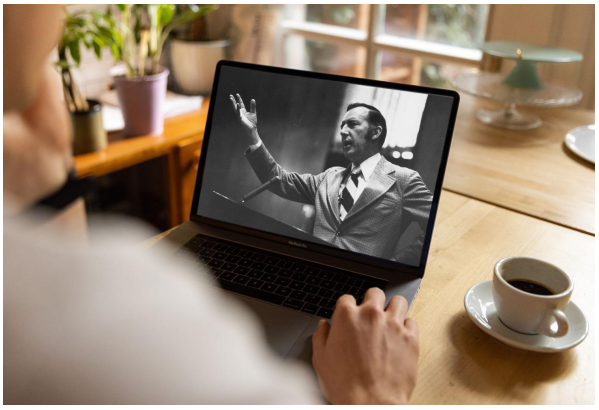

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