

Grace Teaches Godliness



Grace (Part 12)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you precious truths out of Scripture. The theme that we're studying together this week is Grace, one that's particularly appropriate for this season. If you can understand and apply the truths that I'll be sharing with you, they will enable you to face the New Year with greater assurance and confidence than ever before.

In previous talks on this theme we've seen that Scripture depicts grace as God's face turned toward us and shining upon us. The result is always peace. This is more than a mere attitude on God's part. It's more than a mere concept. God actually transmits His own presence to us in His grace. And so when we are living and walking in the grace of God, we're surrounded with a different atmosphere. We're protected. I used the example of people driving on a hot, muggy day and all the other people have cars that are not air conditioned.

But the person who's in the grace of God is like somebody who is in an air conditioned car. The weather all round is the same, but the atmosphere around that person is different. He has a coolness, an ease which others don't have. So that's what the grace of God is like. It's God's presence transmitted to us.

In my talk yesterday I referred to two Old Testament pictures of God's grace. One from the book of Psalms where it says, "God will surround the righteous with His favor or His grace like a shield." So God's grace is like a shield, an invisible shield that surrounds us on all sides and protects us from all evil.

And then the second picture from the book of Proverbs where it says, "That the favor of a king is like a cloud with the spring rain." And I pointed out that Jesus is not just a King, but He's the King of all kings. And when His favor is upon us we are kind of surrounded by that cloud that brings fruitfulness and blessing. A cloud that's welcome wherever it comes.

Today I'm going to share with you another aspect of God's amazing grace, one that may at first surprise you. Many people who are brought up to believe in the grace of God and use phrases like "the grace of God" don't realize this particular aspect of God's grace. It is that grace teaches us.

Let me say that again, "grace teaches us."

I'm going to turn to the second chapter of Paul's epistle to Titus to bring out this truth. Now in this epistle, and particularly in this chapter, Paul is telling Titus, who was a young man in the ministry serving as a pastor or representative of Paul, how to care for God's people, how to do the best for them and how to bring out the best in them. And he speaks about various different categories within the total congregation, like the young men, the old men, the older women and so on. And in each section of this particular chapter Paul tells Titus what he is to teach them. But at the close of the chapter he goes on to say, "Remember it's God's grace that teaches all of us." In other words, Titus is to be an instrument of the grace of God in teaching what Paul tells him to teach. I don't have time to read the whole chapter, but I'll just go through the particular verses that bring out this emphasis of teaching. Titus chapter 2 verse 1-3

> "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. [Encourage or exhort, again that's a form of teaching.] Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them." (NIV)

If you pick out the various groups there it speaks about the older men, the older women, the young men and slaves. And in each there's a particularly appropriate emphasis on the teaching that they need. But then Paul goes on to close the chapter by picturing the grace of God. And what he is really saying is, all these different aspects of teaching all proceed from one source which is the grace of God. And so in verses 11 through 14 of the chapter, this is what Paul says concerning the grace of God:

> "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. [that's a beautiful phrase isn't it?] 'The grace of God that brings salvation.' When God looks upon us with favor, out of that will come salvation. Then speaking still about the grace of God, in the next verse Paul says:] It [that's God's grace] teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." (NIV)

Let's look at some of the things that grace teaches. And as I do this I want you to check on your own life. Is the grace of God teaching you these things or are you perhaps not as good a pupil as you ought to be of God's grace? For instance the first is very powerful. Grace teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passion. You know, you'll never get far in life if you don't know how to say "No" and mean it. There are situations where you are confronted with enticements to evil or with a compromise with evil or an easy way which is not God's way. And you are never going to succeed in life if you haven't learned to say "No" and mean it and say "No" in such a way that the devil and everybody else knows you really mean and it's no good in bothering you anymore with that temptation. And it's grace that teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passion.

Second, grace teaches us to live self-controlled, upright, godly lives. Some people have got the idea that grace means you can do anything that you like. That's the exact opposite of what God says. If you are being taught by grace it will teach you to live self-controlled, upright and godly.

Third, grace teaches us to wait for the appearing of Jesus Christ. It gives us an objective to which our lives are directed, the blessed hope of the appearing of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. I believe a person who is not excited and concerned about the return of Jesus is not really living in the grace of God.

Then grace reminds us that Jesus died to redeem us from all wickedness. To purify us. The whole emphasis in this passage is turning from wickedness and being redeemed from it and being purified.

And fifth, grace teaches us that we ought to be eager to do what is good. Isn't that a different picture of grace from what some people hear in their churches? It's just the exact opposite. Grace doesn't set a lower standard than law. It sets a higher standard. There's a difference. Law teaches from without. Grace teaches from within. Law is commandments, it's standards that are held up before you that so "Do this! Don't do that!" You say, "Fine, that's good." But there's something in you that cannot respond. There's a rebel in there that just won't yield to the law.

Grace comes in and changes the rebel from within. And then grace begins to speak to that converted rebel and say, "Now

this is the way you need to live. This is how you ought to answer such-and-such a person. This is the way through this difficulty." And when you confronted with this temptation, there's only one word you can say, and that's "No!" That's how grace teaches.

I want to close today by quoting two warnings from the New Testament against abusing God's grace. I suppose you realize that it is possible to abuse the grace of God. That's a terrible thing to do. Second Corinthians 6:1, Paul says:

> "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain." (NIV)

In other words, that proves it's possible to receive the grace of God in vain. What does that mean? It means you lay claim to God's grace. God's grace begins to operate in you life, but you don't let grace teach. You don't come under the discipline of grace. You go on still living your own way, pleasing yourself, and claiming to be in the grace of God. But you're deceiving yourself. Because if you're living in the grace of God, the things that grace teaches you will be manifested in your life. And if they're not manifested in your life, you are receiving the grace of God in vain.

And then in the fourth verse of the epistle to Jude there's a very strong warning.

> "For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord." (NIV)

Now again, experience shows that kind of thing goes on in churches and other places today. People claim to be living in the grace of God but they've turned it into immorality. They're actually immoral people. They're seducing women, they're living loose lives, they're immoral people. And yet they claim to be in the grace of God. But the Scripture says they've changed the grace of God into a license for immorality. It's a very real possibility to do that.

How can we be sure we won't do that? The only way, I think, is to let grace teach us. To read our Bibles and let grace teach us out of our Bibles what it means to be a real Christian. The kind of life we ought to lead. And let grace supply us with the ability to lead that kind of life. So let me emphasize in closing today, it's most important that you learn to let grace teach you.

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.

Radio Program

Transcript: TS-R077-102-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
Website: derekprince.com

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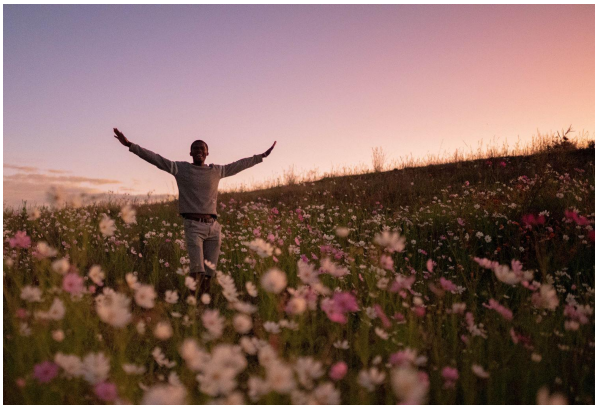

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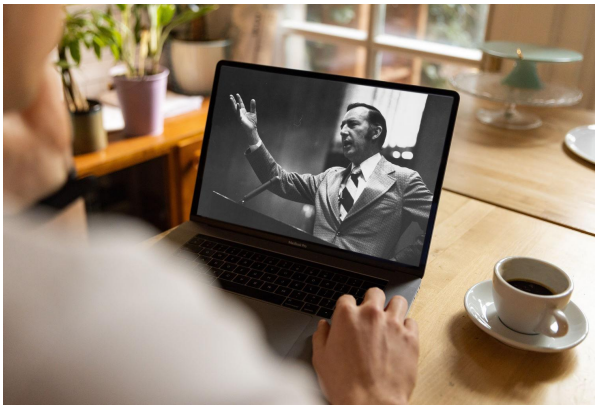

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