

Sunday, May 8, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD 2022 (15)
The Grace of God (6)
How Should I Respond To His Grace?

In our study this year, the last several lessons we have been addressing the grace of God. It is my hope that we have a greater appreciation of how amazing God's grace is. In addition to defining what grace is, we have noted abuses of grace and devoted several lessons to understanding what God's grace has done for us. Today, we want to address our response to God's grace. **How should I respond to the grace of God?**

I. I need to deal with my sins –

- a. We have already established God's grace is the prime factor in our forgiveness.
- b. In scripture, men heard the truth and were convicted – which led to changes – Acts 2:37-38 – they were cut to the heart...; Acts 16:29-30 – the jailer falls down knowing he needs to act;
- c. So obviously the first thing we must do in response to His grace is receive forgiveness of sin.
- d. Furthermore, we understand that if we sin, even as Christians, we can still be forgiven – 1 John 1:7-9. So if you are in sin as a Christian, take care of your sins. God's grace is there and greater than our sins
- e. But what about those sins we struggle with? What if you have struggles with weaknesses and specific sins? We find ourselves in a battle with Satan continually to overcome. And he KNOWS our weaknesses and will seek to exploit them (2 Corinthians 2:11, 1 Peter 5:8, etc.).
 - i. First, we MUST understand we cannot persist in sin and be pleasing to God. Too many passages contradict that – 1 John 3:6-9, Romans 6:1-2, etc.
 - ii. But, if we are striving to live right and working to take care of our sins, we ought to be living with assurance. I believe that is part of John's point in 1 John 1:7-9, 2:1-2.
 - iii. We need to be doing what we can to overcome our sins.
 1. We cannot continue in rebellion and persistent sin and expect God to be pleased with us. We HAVE TO be working at it.
 2. Romans 12:21 challenges us to not be overcome by evil, but to overcome evil with good.
 3. 1 John 5:4-5 notes that whoever is born of God overcomes the world.
 4. Luke 13:24, "**Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.**"
 5. We dealt with some things we can do when we addressed proper attitudes toward sin. But certainly, more could be said if that is desired. Summarized, consider Galatians 5:24, *And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*
 - iv. BUT in such things do not forget the greatness of God's grace. (Romans 5:20-21 – His grace IS greater than our sins (*BUT, consider 6:1-2 also). He can forgive and He wants to forgive us (2 Peter 3:9). It's up to us to let Him by doing our part.
 - v. Can we reach a point where we cannot be forgiven?
 1. I believe it IS possible to reach that point - 1 John 5:16 – sin leading to death, Hebrews 6:4-6 speaks of it being impossible to renew one to repentance. So you can reach a point where forgiveness is out of the question.
 2. Just like the hardened soil in the parable of the Sower – we can again harden our hearts.
 3. We can sear our conscience (1 Timothy 4:2).

4. WE MUST NEVER FORGET THE POSSIBILITY OF THIS! And let that be motivation to not let it happen.
5. BUT, having said that, I do not believe that HAS TO BE permanent. Perhaps, the better way to describe that is to say one cannot be forgiven RIGHT NOW. I believe that anyone can eventually repent and return – consider Manasseh. But there is certainly NO guarantee that such will happen.

II. I need to resolve to live for Him

- a. Continually scripture teaches that as Christians we are new creatures.
 - i. We no longer live as we used to. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 – “such were some of you”;
 - ii. Ephesians 4:17 we no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles
 - iii. 2 Corinthians 5:17 – if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...
 - iv. Romans 6:3-4 – we were raised to walk in newness of life.
- b. I need to put on the new man - Titus 2:11-14 - it must be reflected in how I live. We deny ungodliness and we live soberly and righteously.
- c. I need to obey Him – Hebrews 5:9 – this really summarizes our response to grace. 1 John 1:5-10 – I need to be walking in the light as he is in the light.
- d. If I truly understand and appreciate His grace, I am going to want to do everything He wants me to do. I know it will never be enough, but it is the appropriate response – cf. 1 John 4:19 – we love Him because He first loved us.

III. I ought to be thankful for His grace – Thanksgiving is the appropriate response to grace.

- a. 9 times in the NKJV, the word for grace is translated “thanks”. – 2 Timothy 1:3, 2 Corinthians 9:15, 1 Corinthians 15:57.
- b. Consider the 1 leper that returned to thank Jesus (Luke 17:7-19) an example of gratitude. We are reminded that we must continually give thanks – 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Ephesians 5:20 – and for all things.
- c. Consider this: Can we ever thank God enough? A true appreciation of His grace will make that thought even more profound.

IV. I need to be humbled by His grace – James 4:6. Realizing God’s grace, I realize how unworthy I am. My prayers to Him, my attitude toward Him and everything else will humble me. Recall Matthew 5:3 – Blessed are the poor in spirit – this is where it starts. James 4:10 reminds us that if we want to be exalted by Him, we must first humble ourselves.

Consider also Luke 17:7-10 – where Jesus speaks of a servant serving. Doing his work, he realizes his is still unworthy. There is a humility in his service.

V. I need to trust God because of His grace – I need to believe in His greatness and put my trust in him.

- a. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please Him.
- b. Ephesians 1:12-13 – as we noted what God’s grace has done to save us, *“in him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth...”*
- c. Hebrews 13:9 – let your heart be established by grace. The idea of this is a confidence we have because of Him.
- d. Consider all God has graciously done for us, certainly we need to believe that He can do for us what needs to be done. Therefore, we fully trust Him.

VI. I need to show Him reverence

- a. Hebrews 12:28 – with our grace toward Him we serve Him with reverence and godly fear.
- b. This goes without saying, when we appreciate the greatness of His grace.
- c. I need to worship God with due reverence – Colossians 3:16 – singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. This is speaking of our gratitude as we worship. Our worship to God is to be in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). My understanding is that applies to the form of worship (what we do and how we do it) AND the heart behind what we do. If we appreciate the grace of God, it will be duly reflected as we worship Him.

VII. I need to use my abilities –

- a. While God's grace is available to all, each of us is different. And we each have differing abilities.
- b. Romans 12:6 notes whatever ability we have, use it and develop it to its fullest.
- c. While the Bible does not use the phrase, "Give God your best", it is clearly implied – Matthew 6:33 we put the kingdom first; Matthew 22:37 – we love God with all our heart, soul and mind; Romans 12:1- we present ourselves as a living sacrifice, etc. Colossians 3:23 speaks of doing whatever you do heartily as to the Lord (while directed toward bondservants, it is clearly a principle).
- d. When we truly appreciate how great God's grace has been toward us, we are not going to just sit back and give Him leftovers.

VIII. I need to wish it upon others –

- a. We know that God wants us to share His message with others. This has always been His desire (cf. Matthew 28:19-20).
- b. Romans 1:7 – Paul's salutary remark to the Romans and in most of his letters included God's grace be showered upon them. We know it as a common greeting, but considering Paul's relationship with these brethren, I am convinced it was more than mere ritual.
- c. I must show grace to others – I need to serve others. Just like Jesus, I need to learn to serve others. 1 Peter 4:9-11 notes that we are to be hospitable to one another, sharing with others as "*good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" I need to forgive others, I need to be patient with them, I need to care, etc.
- d. Appreciating God's grace, how can we possibly keep it to ourselves? As Paul stated, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" 1 Corinthians 9:16, etc. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11, etc.

IX. I need to keep studying His word

- a. The answer to this is simple – study His word with a desire to learn it and live it.
- b. We have noted how God's word is associated with His grace – Acts 20:32. 2 Peter 3:18 I need to be striving to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord;

X. **Accept who I am** - 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 – by the grace of God, "I am what I am." This addresses contentment and accepting my place, whatever that may be. You are who you are. Now strive to be the best You that you can be.

XI. **Realize that we can fall from grace** – Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 12:15, etc. Our final observation is to realize that while we may be recipients of God's saving grace, we can choose to reject it again. We can walk away and "fall from grace". That is why we must never be arrogant when it comes to receiving and appreciating God's grace. Note Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 9:27 – He disciplined his body, lest even he be disqualified.

And thus we can see what His grace ought to mean to us. When we fully appreciate His grace, it will be manifested in our lives. We will strive to control our words, actions and even our thinking. In summary, we will live the Christian life and it WILL be evident to others. I conclude with 1 Corinthians 15:9-10, *For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* God has showered us with His grace, where you are concerned is it in vain? Think about it!