

What Grace is Not

It is true that God loves us unconditionally, but if you think that this gives us permission to do whatever we want to because God is not holding us accountable to our sins, then you do not have a correct understanding of grace. Grace does not give you permission to go and live like the world.

For example, let us use an example that we can all understand and put it into this perspective. A happily married couple is sharing their lives together. The woman tells the man that she loves him with all of her heart. I love you unconditionally. I will love you forever! Nothing can separate me from you.

Question: Would the man, knowing that his wife loved him unconditionally, then feel free to go out with other women because his wife has proclaimed her unconditional love and devotion to him? Would he feel free to become involved in relationships with other women, committing adultery; living his life as if he was free to do anything that he wanted to do?

Or would he receive his wife's words of commitment and guard those precious words in his heart because he falls more in love with his wife every day? When the enemy comes in with temptations, he would not be tempted because he is guarding the relationship that he has with his wife with all of his heart. A devoted husband does not take this kind of love for granted.

This is the kind of foundation that God's unconditional love lays for us. God's word tells to beware! We have an enemy who is continually trying to pervert God's grace.

Acts 13:10 *And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*

God has provided everything that we need in order to live our lives in peace and victory.

Jude 1:1 *Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: 2 Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied.*

But, we have to fight to maintain the truth of his word because we have an enemy who is trying to pervert it.

Jude 1:3 *Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto you.*

He is unknowingly infecting the Christian church with principles that takes us away from the power of grace by putting the emphasis back on the power of the flesh to maintain his righteousness.

Jude 1:4 *For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men (ungodly- don't think like God), turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, (carnality-trying to live the Christian life by the power of the flesh) and denying (contradicting the success of the cross-acting as though it was not enough) the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

There are false prophets among us who are denying the success of the cross.

They are trying to take us back to the principles that govern the law putting the emphasis on the performance back on the flesh.

2 Peter 2:1 false prophets and teachers among us deny (contradict) Jesus (the success of the cross)

V 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption (separated from its source of life): for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. **20** For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. **21** turn back from way of righteousness

People who proclaim to be saved by grace are promoting distorted versions of it.

Acts 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them

Perverse -distorted, misinterpreted, corrupt (separated from its source of life)

Grace sets us free from our works. We are His workmanship. It is all about what God does for us.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast. **10** For we are his workmanship.

The Old Covenant was focused on the work of man's hands and he was unable to do what he really wanted to do because he lacked the will power to do what he really wanted to do.

Romans 7:18 *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*

God wants to set us free from the punishment that comes with not having the will power to do what we want to do.

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Law works on will power from outside in and god of this world puts man in remembrance of the law and the performance of the flesh.

The Law in the midst of a circumstance produces: condemnation guilt anger fear, hopelessness, a sense of being a disappointment to God and

therefore not loved by God. It also draws your attention to your failure and what you have to do, or what you haven't done.

Satan tempts us with the law, and then he accuses us when we have not measured up to it.

What about Unmerited favor-God is good but I don't deserve it. This common definition of grace almost killed me. I found myself continually trying to address that issue because more than anything I wanted to hear my savior say, Well done thou good and faithful servant.

It took me back to Romans 7:18. To will is present but how to perform it, I find not. It seemed like the harder I tried to prove to God and to myself that I deserved to experience the goodness of God, the more the undeserving became magnified because I could never quite accomplish what I set out to do.

I spent years living under a sense of guilt because I knew that "Jesus paid my debt even though He did not owe anything and I owed him a debt that I could not pay!" I felt unworthy of the sacrifice that He made for me and in spite of all of my efforts to live up the expectations that I placed upon myself, nothing satisfied that sense of unworthiness.

I could picture Jesus hanging on the cross, beaten beyond recognition. I felt like it was my fault. He had to go through that because of me.

One day I found myself reading the following scripture:

Luke 14:12 *Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. 13 But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: 14 And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

Jesus is not expecting us to pay him back! That takes all of the pleasure out of giving a gift. I remember one year at Christmas time. I had a certain person in mind that I really wanted to give a special gift to. I had never given her anything before at Christmas time, and she had never given anything to me. I was so excited. I gave her the gift and a few hours later I heard a knock on my door. It was that same lady bringing me a gift in exchange for the one I gave her. That instantly removed the joy that I had when I gave her the gift because I knew that it made her feel obligated to give me one.

Let me tell you about my favorite Christmas. Christmas was always a stressful time for me. Money was tight. I had five kids all expecting special gifts, and I wanted to meet their expectations. Not only did I have the kids, but a husband, parents and in laws and friends that I felt like I needed to buy presents for.

I found myself thinking that Jesus was the one that I also wanted to give a gift to but there was no money left over. More than anything I wanted to do something to show him how much I loved him. One evening the phone rang. It was the local radio station saying that they had an ongoing contest. They had a certain amount of money to give away. If I could guess the exact amount, the money would be mine. I made a wild guess and they congratulated me and declared me the winner!

As I hung up, I was so excited because now I had something to give Jesus! The next morning I told my mother about the contest that I had won. She in turn told my sister in law who happened to work for the radio station. My sister in law said, It had to have been a prank caller because we are not promoting any contest. At first I was crushed, but then I heard God speak to me, Suzan I know that if you had it to give to me, you would give it! That was so freeing. That was His gift to me.

Reading on in Luke 14, it says that if we are going to follow the Lord, we are going to have to count the cost.

Luke 14:26 *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

When we come to Christ, the source of our identity shifts. It is no longer based on our family name, who our brothers or sisters you are, or even who we are in this world.

27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross [**Strong's Concordance-give up all confidence in the flesh**], and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

In order to be a true disciple of Jesus, we are going to have to completely give up all of the confidence that we have in ourselves. Unless we do, we will find ourselves lacking what it takes to finish the course!

Luke 14:28 *For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?*

29 *Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him,*

30 *Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.*

31 *Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?*

32 *Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace.*

33 *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.*

If we don't place all of our confidence in God's provision for us without the thought of recompense, it will be like the man who set out to build the tower but half way through that he did not have what it took to finish it. If we see that we can't complete the task based on our own resources, we are going to have to make peace with God some other way!

Ephesians 2 says that we are saved by grace through faith. We are His workmanship! The word grace there means the divine inspiration of God and its reflection in our lives. In other words, grace is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives supplying us with the inspiration, motivation, direction, instructions and power that it takes in order to live a victorious life. He supplies everything!

2Peter 1:3 *According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:*

Proverbs 16:3 Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.

James 1:5 *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

When we find ourselves in need of help, God wants us to feel free to ask him, believing that we will receive even if we don't feel like we deserve it!

This is grace: Unmerited favor with no strings attached!

This is not saying that we never have to do anything, but it is saying that everything we do has to be initiated and empowered by God. We don't live by will power, we live by the power of God working from the inside out.

Php 2:13 *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

Jesus does not want nor does He expect a recompense. His blessing or recompense comes by knowing that just as he has taken care of our needs out of his great love for us, we are taking care of the needs of other people because we love them. He does not expect us to pay him back, but he is blessed when we pay it forward with no strings attached!

John 15:12 *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

