

God's Grace: Are You Paralyzed by Grace?

We have a limited view of God's grace. The grace of God has been captured and domesticated for weekly use. The grace of God, capable of reaching across every culture, every gender, and every generation, has been reduced to mean simply, forgiveness for everyone. We have turned it to our uses, instead of His.

Last week, we learned from Titus 2:11–14 that first His grace saves, then it teaches. Grace is also about denying ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live sensible and upright lives.

Richard Foster - There is a disconnect between the good news of Jesus' sacrifice and our calling to become the light of the world. People, having been saved by grace, are now paralyzed by it.

We need to discover that there is grace for everyday living, relationships, and ministry to others. If our view of grace is limited to receiving forgiveness, Jesus cannot be our model for how to receive grace, live in grace, and depend upon grace.

Dallas Willard warns us against the idea "that the low level of spiritual living among professing Christians is to be regarded as 'only natural,' only what is to be expected." Our destiny is constant failure and that Christ's ministry is nothing but unending forgiveness.

Our life with God must start with the cure, but the possibilities of new life in Christ are endless.

Story of the default ending to a person's prayer - asking for forgiveness

Hebrew 10:1-3

Like the Old Testament people, this person has reminded himself and God of his sin.

Dallas Willard - "miserable sinner theology." Simply put, if we are told often enough that we are miserable sinners who are unable to overcome our shortcomings in God's eyes, sooner or later we will begin to see ourselves in that light, even though we have turned to Christ! For such people, "following" Jesus does not include the possibility of being formed into his likeness.

We fail to understand grace and Jesus. To see the work of Jesus as nothing but an endless offering for sin is to consign Him to the Old Testament priesthood. Surely His *is* a greater priesthood, capable of altering us at the very core.

We can usher Jesus out of the Old Testament Temple, once and for all, and receive Him, not only as the source of forgiveness, but also the master teacher of life. This is the full work of grace.

God has provided us with a way to stop sin from killing us; it's called the new birth. The image of spiritual birth also contains the hope of spiritual growth.

Grace not only wipes away sin, grace teaches us how to avoid sin. *There's a cure, not just a treatment.*

Parable of the college students.

Which of these two students laid hold of the opportunity given to them? The first student, who was humble and hardworking.

God's grace is something like this parable. He does for us what we could not possibly do for ourselves. Why would we squander the possibilities of new birth in Christ?

This is demonstrated for us in the life of the apostle Paul.

After his conversion, he began to call himself "God's fellow worker" (1 Cor. 3:9).

He was also aware that his “qualifications” were not the issue: *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* (1 Cor. 15:10).

Can you see what a strange combination of words Paul puts together here? He uses “grace” and “worked harder” all in one sentence!

Dallas Willard -*Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning.*

The apostle Paul understood this side of grace as well. The famous apostle is the same one who described his task as one of “*great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger*” (2 Cor. 6:4–10), all to share what he himself had been given. Paul had no trouble seeing the connection between grace and effort.

Richard Foster -*Grace saves us from life without God—even more it empowers us for life with God.*

The deeper side of grace is the discovery that our new birth should be followed by growth into the image of Jesus. The deeper side of grace is that when we begin to join in the family business, we will also begin to take on the family likeness.

Here’s another way to think of it: *co-laboring with Christ is the very activity that begins to grow the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.* As we joyfully work side-by-side with Jesus, we begin to become conformed to his image. Romans 8:29

Matthew 11:28–30 -*Jesus invites anyone who would follow him to come under his instruction and learn his way of life.*

Grace is about more than knowing, it’s also about being.