

Grace, Mercy, And Favor (Part Two)

A Way of Life From God

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Today, just five weeks away from the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, we will be picking up again on the topic of grace, mercy, and favor, and the reality of God's perfect work in our lives that must be considered when preparing for and going through these holy days, and into the count of the Feast of Firstfruits. To those called into the Body of Christ, being sharply aware God's grace, mercy, and favor, working within us, individually and within the body as a whole, to accomplish God's purpose as a privileged responsibility, that cannot be carelessly forsaken.

Brethren, I purposely used "forsaken," even though it is an archaic word, because its meaning is appropriate here. The word simply means "to abandon, or leave someone who needs or counts on you." Although God does not need us, He is counting on us to do our job, and to see His grace, mercy, and favor constantly at work within each of the elect in Jesus Christ, and to live accordingly.

Turn to II Corinthians.

II Corinthians 5:17-21 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

II Corinthians 6:1-2 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

II Corinthians 6:16-18 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore, "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

II Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Two weeks ago, I started this sermon series on grace, mercy, and favor to build a platform on which the whole of the series needed to rest. This [topic] is an incredible privileged responsibility we have been given, but it must never become our badge of righteousness, but rather a serious responsibility in becoming holy as God is holy.

We must never in this life have the attitude of the Pharisee, who virtually, pridefully pounded on his breast like a gorilla. Rather we must always have the attitude of one who beats the breast in grateful humility for being in a place we know we could not possibly be in except for the costly mercy of the Father and the Word.

I also want to make it perfectly clear from this point forward—I do not profess to be someone who is capable of explaining grace, mercy, and favor in the way that others can, the others who have been blessed with better

minds who can drill down into these things. We have many sermons and articles that have been compiled over the years that you can dig into for the marvelously detailed truth regarding God's grace, mercy, and favor.

What I hope to accomplish with these next three messages (today and two more) is to help us appreciate just how special we are to God, and how much He is counting on His elect to be one united body in and through Jesus Christ because of the Word of God—the grace of God literally resides in each one of us.

This is an awesome thing to consider. But do we fully appreciate the various aspects of God's grace that are at work within us—to be flowing out from each and every one of us? To this point, I would like to insert two comments by John W. Ritenbaugh, regarding II Corinthians 6:1-2. The first is from his series on, "The Covenants, Grace, and Law," and the second is from his series on "Seeking God."

Quoting from "The Covenants":

In other words, do not receive the grace of God to no purpose. That is what vanity is. It has no purpose, no context with reality. God is reality. The Kingdom of God is reality. The law of God is reality. Because it is truth, truth by definition is reality. Again, Paul's appeal is, "Do something!" But what is it we to do? He replies. Truly work with Him to accomplish His will in your life.

John continues:

Jesus Christ says, 'Why call me Lord, and do not do the things that I say?' He is the One who says in Luke 16:29-31, 'If we want to know how to avoid the Lake of Fire, look to Moses and the prophets.' This is why the apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 5:20, 'Be reconciled to God, through the repenting of sin; quit breaking His law.'

And then from, "Seeking God," John said,

J. B. Philips' *New Testament in Modern English* renders this verse as, 'Cooperators with God himself, we beg you not to fail to use the grace of God.' The apostle Paul warns us against receiving grace with no purpose in mind for making the best use of God's wonderful gift. God gives grace to be used by those who receive it.

John continues:

The sanctification process that follows justification requires our cooperation with Him so that the right qualities of understanding and sensitivities are produced by His creative efforts. The cooperation produces Christian works. We must stop resisting Him through neglectful drifting, thus receiving God's grace in vain—if we drift.

Brethren, because this is a sermonette with a limited amount of time, I only hope to point us in the right direction. But we will, God willing, more closely examine this the next time I have the privilege to speak to you.

But my purpose today as we approach the Passover is to help us begin to add another layer of appreciation for Jesus Christ—what He is, what He has done, and what we are right now through and by Him.

As we go through this, please keep in mind another critical quote from John Ritenbaugh that comes from the booklet, *Prepare to Meet Your God*, because it is a vital piece for us to understand these messages. John wrote, "Remember [just like Jacob's dream], God chooses us and meets us at the foot of the ladder making the difference in our lives. He gives us a way of life to follow, and we pledge to follow it. Thus, true religion is not a way to God but a way of living [that comes] from God."

Brethren, why is this series so important? Because God's grace, and His sharing what He is with us through Jesus Christ, is so that we can produce the fruit of righteousness as this grace of God dwells within us.

This really boils down to a very simple concept (which Satan has used to confuse the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus) that by the grace of God dwelling in us through Jesus Christ, we can and must be producing good works—the fruit of righteousness—living as God lives right now, not as a way to God, but as a way of living like He lives. It should now be an intrinsic part of each one of us through Jesus Christ.

It is a very simple concept. But Satan has used it to distort the very simple truth concerning grace of God and works.

Turn to II Corinthians 11.

II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

There are those who try to confuse this very simple truth, just as Satan did right from the beginning with Eve. Turn to Jude.

Jude 3-4 Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

This may sound harsh to some, but we live in a world where men have distorted the simple truth and twisted it to turn His very holy nature of grace into an excuse for ‘anything goes’ once you have come under the blood of Jesus Christ.

But what does God have to say about that? Turn to Hebrews 10.

Hebrews 10:28-29 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how

much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

To those who have been called right now—to have God dwelling in us to live according to His Spirit of grace—these are very sobering words. God's grace is not a ticket to 'once saved, always saved.' But the very nature of God's perfect lovingkindness works in us to be doing the works of righteousness in unity just like He is from the inside out.

Otherwise, we trample on the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ. His grace, His very character is to be ours right now through Jesus Christ [so as] to be a light to a world stumbling in the darkness.

Please turn with me to John 1.

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:10-14 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

We need to understand the reality of God's grace and truth dwelling in us right now to live a way of life as part that light of righteousness to a dark world that is getting darker everyday. As Dr. David Maas has been pointing

out in his series of commentaries, and as every other man has tried to drive home the point in their commentaries week after week, we are living in a world of darkness where we need to be preachers of righteousness.

Brethren, we have a job to do by the grace of God dwelling in us and part of that job is to be preachers of righteousness in word and deed, just as Noah was in his time that had become the absolute antithesis of the grace of God. This is something we are going to explore in more detail the next time I speak to you the week before Passover.

It is only through the incredible sacrifice of God that we now have His grace dwelling in us to live up to the way of life that God expects, and is only possible now as a way of life from God through Jesus Christ, and the grace of God dwelling in each one of us.

Please go see Psalm 106 and all that Israel failed to do because they were missing the most valuable and precious gift that is now ours to use, and have a vital part in the reality of the family of God now.

As we close, please turn to Romans 8.

Romans 8:1-17 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God [by His grace] dwells in

you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Brethren, as we approach the Passover, let us faithfully consider the enormous cost the Father and the Son had to ensure that God's own Spirit of grace be intrinsically part of us as a new creation to produce righteousness. We have God's grace dwelling in us through Jesus Christ as a key to a way of life from God.