

Grace for Leadership

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: Romans 5:12, 18-19.

II. God relates to us based on either Adam's sinful act or Christ's merit.

A. God relates to those who identify with Adam on the basis of the Law.

1. There are only two ways to respond to the Law: perfect obedience or disobedience. (Deuteronomy 28)

2. Jesus was the only person who perfectly obeyed the Law. The rest of us disobey the Law and are under the curse of God. (Galatians 3:10-13)

B. God relates to those who identify with Christ on the basis of grace. (Romans 5:14)

1. Christ, who perfectly obeyed, took our curse. We, though disobedient, through Christ receive the blessing of God. (Ephesians 1:3; Philippians 4:19)

2. Grace is God's blessing through Christ to those who deserve His curse.

3. In a sense, God relates to us based on the Law, but through Christ's perfect fulfillment of the Law.

III. There are several misunderstandings about grace.

A. Grace is God's unmerited favor. This assumes that we started with a clean sheet of paper when actually we deserved God's wrath.

B. God grades on a curve with the best people at 100% and the rest of us measured after that. But God requires perfect obedience to the Law.

C. Grace is God's unconditionally accepting us and loving us just as we are. However, God's approval does have to be earned, but that is what Christ did. (Romans 5:18)

1. It is critical to understand our position of undeservedness and Christ's work, or else we have the idea that grace is cheap.

2. A correct understanding of grace produces gratitude in our hearts toward Christ.

IV. It is not enough to understand grace theoretically. We must also live by grace.

A. There are two different views of living by grace.

1. We are saved by grace, but our performance afterwards induces His favor in our lives.

a) Many Christians intuitively believe this. They are saved by grace but living by sweat.

b) This leads to a performance based relationship with God in which we think if we are obedient, God owes us something. If we are disobedient, we believe that He will bring doom on our lives.

2. Jesus Christ bought and paid for every blessing and answered prayer in our lives.

a) If we are honest, most of our spiritual acts are performed with mixed motives.
b) Our spiritual lives and obedience are acceptable to God based on Christ.
(1 Peter 2:5)

c) If we truly understand grace, our response will be gratitude and love. (Luke 7:36ff)

B. Grace is the engine that continuously powers our obedience. (2 Timothy 2:1)

1. Among the New Testament uses of “grace”, there is the grace of privilege and the grace of power. (1 Corinthians 15:9-10)

2. Everything that we are able to accomplish in personal obedience or in His kingdom is through the grace of God at work in you. We see this in Abraham’s life, both his faith and his failures. (John 15:5; Genesis 12; Hebrews 11; Genesis 15; Romans 4; Genesis 18, 20, 22; 2 Corinthians 8, 11:23-28, 12:9)

3. We have two options: we can either be strong in Christ or strong in ourselves.

a) Being strong in Christ means that we realize that we are insufficient in ourselves to be obedient or do the work of the ministry. We are dependent on the grace of God.

b) To be an effective leader, we must learn that we are weak and He is strong.

Application questions:

1. What does it mean to relate to God through Adam or through Christ? What are the consequences of choosing to relate to God through Adam? How about choosing to relate to God through Christ?

2. When you evaluate your relationship with God, do you think you try to relate to God based on your performance or based on Christ’s? Why does it matter?

3. How do we practically rely on God’s grace to live daily life?
