

How to Live by Grace

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: Matthew 20:1-16.

B. We often come to salvation by grace, but then try to live the Christian life by our merit.

C. Because of this, we think that God's blessing is based on how well we have performed in recent days.

II. The Bible teaches that every blessing that comes from God comes on the basis of Christ's merit, not ours. (Ephesians 1:3)

A. Nothing can separate us from Christ's love because nothing can separate us from Him. (1 Corinthians 1:36)

B. It is through Christ that we receive blessings from God. Nothing we can do will make God love us anymore or any less.

1. The virtue of Christ does not change, even when we fall into sin.

2. Because God's blessings and love come through Christ, they do not change.

3. The way we experience God's blessing may change, but His love does not.

C. Salvation is the greatest blessing that we could ever receive. (Romans 8:32)

III. God's grace is the basis for all blessings. (Matthew 19:29-30)

A. We look at this parable and feel that the landowner was unfair to the workers who came at the beginning of the day.

1. The kingdom's operating principle is not reward, but grace.

2. We tend to relate to the 1st hour workers, when we need to relate to the 11th hour workers.

B. God's grace is free.

1. The landowner was a generous man. He was fair to the first hour workers and successively more generous with each group of laborers. (Deuteronomy 24:15)

2. The landowner paid them based on their need, not on what they had earned. (Philippians 4:19)

3. God works on the basis of grace and He will meet our needs. God calls us to serve Him not because He needs us, but because we need Him. (Genesis 22:18; Isaiah 30:18; Jeremiah 29:10; 1 Peter 5:10; Hebrews 4:16)

4. Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense.

C. God's grace is sovereign. God has a right to dispense His blessings as He sovereignly determines. (Matthew 20:15)

1. We tend to compare our blessings to others and be envious.

2. God asserts His right to treat us differently consistently in the Bible. (Romans 9:21)

3. We can never obligate God to bless us by our obedience. (Luke 17:10; 1 Chronicles 29:14; Job 41:11; Romans 11:35; Matthew 19:30; Romans 6:23)

4. God's grace cannot be enjoyed when there is an attitude of deserving and comparing. (Romans 11:6)

D. God's grace can be abused. (Jude 4; Romans 6:1; Galatians 5:13)

1. In order to avoid abusing God's grace, we must learn to separate responsibility from reward. He is worthy of obedience even if He never blesses us.

2. In order to avoid abusing God's grace, we must separate the means of God's blessing from the cause of God's blessings. We are encouraged to study the Bible and pray because God has chosen to bless us through those activities, but those activities do not cause God's blessing.

a) Though our union with Christ is unalterable, the experience of that union is dependent on our practice of faith through the scripture and prayer.

b) We grow and mature through laying down our lives, but God loves us because of His grace, not because of those acts. (Isaiah 43:4-6; John 12:24)

Application questions:

1. How does the knowledge that God's grace is free change your attitude toward Him?

2. Why is it important to understand the difference between the means of God's blessing and the cause of His blessing?

3. If God has a right to dispense blessings as He chooses, how does that impact your attitude toward the people around you?
