

Coupled by Love

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I. Introduction.

A. God's grace comes to us because of our union with Christ, not because of our performance.

(Romans 5:20-6:1ff; Galatians 5:13)

B. God is not indifferent to our behavior, but His love is not dependent on it. Jesus earned God's grace for us.

C. If your concept of grace doesn't expose you to the possibility of abusing it, then you do not have the correct concept of grace. Limitless grace is dangerous, but effective.

II. The solution to the temptation to abuse grace is not to add legalism to grace, but to teach grace so well that we are gripped by its nature and we respond out of gratitude rather than duty.

A. The deep realization of God's love for me through Christ will result in a desire to obey Him.

1. Obedience and the spiritual disciplines (the pursuit of holiness) are a response to God's mercy. (Romans 12:1ff)

2. This plea from Paul is for a decisive dedication to sacrifice and holiness, but from an understanding of God's mercy.

a) Quote from William Booth explains how obedience ought to look.

1) The "right principle" of obedience is born of love and gratitude for what God has done for us.

2) The "right rule" is the Word of God which should govern our obedience.

3) The "right end" of obedience is God's glory.

B. Our works are not truly good unless they are motivated by God's love.

III. Acts of true obedience are prompted by love, not performance or fear. An experience of Christ's love compels and impels true obedience. (Galatians 5:6; 2 Corinthians 8:9ff; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Romans 4:7-8; Titus 2:11-13)

IV. Obedience is our way of loving God back. (John 14:15, 21, 23; Ephesians 5:10, 17)

A. Jesus' commands give clear direction. We must be reading the Bible to know what these commands are.

B. Jesus has the authority to give commands.

C. Living by grace does not mean that Jesus is no longer King; rather it means that God no longer relates to us on the basis of our obedience, but on the basis of Christ. The story of the prodigal son illustrates this concept.

Application questions:

1. Do you find yourself afraid to believe that God's grace is limitless? How does your perspective on grace influence how you live out your Christian life?

2. Is your natural tendency to abuse grace or become legalistic? Do a little soul searching and try to understand why you have the tendency that you do. How does this teaching impact the issues that you wrestle with?

3. How does your understanding of grace play out in your relationships? In your expectations of your loved ones? In the training that you do? How can you ensure that your relationships/teaching reflect a true understanding of God's grace?
