

Living By Grace — The Need for Grace

We are going to consider what it means to live by grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor.

There are three major parts of the Christian life.

The first part is becoming a Christian.

Salvation is when we come into a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us, "By grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." "By grace through faith" our sin is forgiven and we become members of God's family.

The second part is being a Christian, this is sanctification.

Once we have been saved through faith in Christ, we are called by God to live in obedience to Him. Throughout our daily lives, the Holy Spirit works to bring changes that reflect what Jesus Christ has done in us. In the midst of a wicked and corrupt world, we are being made a reflection or living testimony of what Jesus is in us. The Holy Spirit constantly gives more grace and power so we are able to demonstrate this new life and righteousness.

The final phase is becoming like Christ, this is glorification.

One of these days we will see Jesus face to face and we will be made like Him. That will be a day of great rejoicing when we shall be like Him and experience a complete transformation. This is going to happen the moment we see Jesus.

Salvation is a work of God's grace from beginning to end.

We all deserve God's judgment and wrath, but God is merciful and gracious to forgive our sins. It is a complete work of grace from beginning to end. We cannot accomplish this supernatural transformation into Christ's likeness on our own. Only God can change our corruptible flesh and make us incorruptible.

Living the Christian life is what causes us the most trouble.

We know that we are saved by God's grace. Many people act like being a Christian is a combination of a little divine grace and a lot of human effort. They end up with a performance-oriented life. When we live like that, we begin thinking that God's favor, grace, and blessing are based on personal performance. God's amazing grace is given regardless of our condition, position, health, weaknesses, or failures. God has given His grace to people whose lives have been full of problems, challenges, and tribulations. It is important for all of us to know that God will show His good grace and mercy to us simply because He is so good.

In the book of 2 Samuel is an illustration of grace.

The story of Mephibosheth teaches important lessons about God's grace.

This story illustrates how God pours out His grace, mercy and blessing on people. You remember that King Saul did not honor or obey God, and the Lord forsook him and his throne. Early in David's life, he had been chosen by God to replace King Saul, because iniquity had been found in the king.

David represented everything Saul was not.

Saul had deep emotional feelings toward David and loved him as deeply as he hated him.

Saul knew the Kingdom was to be taken from his hands and given to David. As a result, Saul looked for every opportunity to kill David. His hatred for David consumed his life and reason.

After being brought into King Saul's service, David and Jonathan — King Saul's son become close friends.

Jonathan pledged to help David avoid his father's vengeance and asked him to remember his descendants with kindness.

1 Samuel 20:13-15 NIV84 "But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family--not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth."

In one day of battle, Saul and Jonathan were killed.

All of Saul's heirs were killed except Jonathan's five-year-old son, Mephibosheth. When Mephibosheth's nurse heard that Jonathan and Saul had died, she fled with Mephibosheth fearing the child would be killed. As she fled, she dropped him, and both of his feet were injured and he was lame for the rest of his life.

David was a living example of God's grace and mercy.

After many years, David remembered Jonathan and wanted to honor the covenant they had made and show special kindness to the house of Saul.

2 Samuel 9:3 "Is there no one still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show God's kindness?"

During the search of the kingdom, Mephibosheth, the son of David's friend Jonathan, was found.

By 2 Samuel 9, Mephibosheth became the object of David's kindness. This story is a lesson of God's grace.

First, he is the grandson of David's enemy, Saul.

Notice the words in 2 Samuel 9:1, 3 "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul"

These are important words. **David did not ask:** "Is there anyone left of the family of my friend, Jonathan?" David wanted to show kindness to the descendants of his enemy. David is modeling God's grace.

This tells us that God shows grace to His enemies.

God's grace is unmerited favor. "While we were still sinners, Christ died." God's grace and mercy comes down to us even when we are at war with Him.

In Exodus 33:19 God told Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

Second, Mephibosheth was physically handicapped and dependent on others.

2 Samuel 9:3 NIV84 "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet."

Mephibosheth was totally dependent on others. When David restored Saul's lands, he was not able to maintain the property. So King David commanded Ziba, Saul's servant to do Mephibosheth's work.

God shows grace to the helpless.

This goes against the idea that grace is "God helping those who help themselves." Grace is not the topping on our efforts. God's grace is above and beyond what we can do. God provided a Savior for us when we were not able to save ourselves.

Third, Mephibosheth was homeless and bankrupt.

2 Samuel 9:4 NIV84 "He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar."

David had control of all of Saul's lands and property.

Mephibosheth had nothing and was bankrupt and living in someone else's home. **Lo Debar** is translated by two powerful definitions. "**Lo**" means **NO** and "**Debar**" means **PASTURE**. By interpretation it means "the house of no bread. Mephibosheth was living in poverty and in fear.

One of the amazing things about God's grace is that He is merciful and kind to people who have great need.

Grace is not an expression of God's approval on our service or performance. God knows every aspect of your life, your spiritual and physical hardship. He is looking at everything in your life and in mercy and love, God gives His grace.

Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 3:10-12 NIV84 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Our hands are empty when we come to God and we have nothing to offer that is of value. We have a good, good Father.

Fourth, Mephibosheth was full of fear.

From the time his nurse took him, he had been hiding in fear and poverty in Lo Debar. When he was brought to David, you can see the tension and fear in his twisted body.

In 2 Samuel 9:7 David said: "Don't be afraid, for I will surely show you kindness..."

This is a point for the fearful. God will show His grace to the fearful. He was brought to David's palace with great fear.

In a poem entitled, "Grace in a Barren Place," Julie Martin captured the feeling of Mephibosheth's soul: "I was that Mephibosheth crippled by my twisted pride and hiding

from you in a barren place. Where You could not find me, where You would not give me what I deserved. But somehow You found me and I don't understand why, but You give me what I do not deserve. You not only spared my desolate life, but You made it bountiful and here at Your table. I will thank You, my King."

God's grace does not come to us because we deserve it.

Even fearful, weak and wretched people receive His kindness.

Fifth, Mephibosheth saw himself as contemptible.

When David told him that he is going to restore his fortunes, Mephibosheth replied:

2 Samuel 9:8 NIV84 "What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?"

He looked at himself as a dead dog. He saw no attraction or value in his life. Why should you care about me?"

This is one of the wonders of the grace that God gives us.

God shows grace to those who are despised and rejected. Amazing grace is undeserved kindness.

What kind of God shows grace like that?

David's kindness was an example of God's behavior.

First, God relentlessly looks for people to whom He can show His grace.

Twice David asked, "Is there anyone left... to whom I can show kindness?" (v.1,3) Time had passed and Jonathan had been dead for years, but David never forgot his promise to show kindness to Jonathan's family. He searched for Mephibosheth and brought him to Jerusalem. In fear he had been hiding from David. He was certain that the king would finish destroying Saul's descendants.

David had a different plan.

You cannot explain it, but God wants to show grace, mercy, and favor.

God is relentless in showing His grace. We deserve eternal death, but God is gracious and merciful, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Second, God desires to show grace more than judgment.

Three times David said he wanted to show kindness to Saul's descendants (v.1,3,7). Two times David said he would restore Mephibosheth's lands (v.7, 9). Four times David said that Mephibosheth would eat at his table for the rest of his days. (v.7, 10, 11, 13). David was going to generously bless Mephibosheth. David's grace and kindness was hard to believe.

Sometimes it is just hard to believe that God wants to show us kindness.

God wants you to get this message more than anything else! God hates sin and everything that it has done, but He wants to show grace and mercy more than wrath.

Listen to what God told Moses.

Exodus 34:6-7 NLT He passed in front of Moses and said, “I am the LORD, I am the LORD, the merciful and gracious God. I am slow to anger and rich in unfailing love and faithfulness. I show this unfailing love to many thousands by forgiving every kind of sin and rebellion. Even so I do not leave sin unpunished, but I punish the children for the sins of their parents to the third and fourth generations.”

2 Samuel 9:11 NIV84 says: “So Mephibosheth ate at David’s table like one of the king’s sons.”

God has a table spread and He invites anyone who will come to God through Christ.
That is the kind of God He is!

What kind of God shows grace like that?

Third, God shows us grace for Another’s sake.

Twice David indicated his desire to show kindness to one of Saul’s descendants “for Jonathan’s sake.” (v.1, 7)

When God shows us His kindness, it is because of Jesus.

Ephesians 1:3 NIV84 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

Jesus paid it all.

He purchased the forgiveness for all of our sins. He purchased every blessing and every answer to prayer. There are no exceptions. Everyone in this room is on the same page. We all have the same need for grace, kindness and mercy in our lives. Without it we are worthless, hopeless, and doomed!

You need grace!

You are a candidate for God’s grace and He wants to pour His grace and mercy on you. He will do it because of Jesus. Will you let Him?