

Study 4: Living by Grace

“The response of delight gives God more honour than the response of mere duty. "Lo, I come; in the roll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8). One of the most breathtaking discoveries that I have ever made is that the centrality of God's glory and the satisfaction of my soul are not at odds. God's zeal to be glorified and my passion to be satisfied do not have to conflict. They come to simultaneous fulfillment in the act of God-exalting, soul-satisfying worship.

The God-centeredness of saving grace is seen in the basic response that God demands for the gift of himself, namely, joyful trust. Of course no one responds to God in this way on his own. We've seen that in previous lectures. Sin and evil hold sway in every human heart apart from saving grace.”

- John Piper, "The God-Centred Ground of Saving Grace"

Justification is being declared righteous.

Sanctification is being made righteous – being conformed to the image of Christ.

Justification is our position before God.

Sanctification is our practice. You don't practice your justification! It happens once for all, upon conversion.

Justification is objective – Christ's work for us.

Sanctification is subjective – Christ's work within us. **Justification** is immediate and complete upon conversion. You will never be more justified than you are the moment you trust in the Person and finished work of Christ.

Sanctification is a process. You will be more sanctified as you continue in grace-motivated obedience.

- C.J. Mahaney, "The Cross Centred Life"

"True holiness does not mean a flight from the world; rather, it lies in the effort to incarnate the Gospel in everyday life, in the family, at school and at work, and in social and political involvement."

- Pope John Paul II

Romans 8: Paul celebrates the new life of the Spirit that Christians enjoy as a result of Christ's saving work (v1-17). He then begins this major section of the letter (v18-39) by emphasizing the final hope of believers, and now he concludes with the same emphasis.*

This "reckoning" (or consider) is not make-believe. It is not screwing up our faith to believe what we do not believe. We are not to pretend that our old nature has died, when we know perfectly well it has not. Instead we are to realise and remember that our former self did die with Christ, thus putting an end to its career. We are to consider what in fact we are, namely dead to sin and alive in God (v11), like Christ. Once we grasp this, that our old life has ended, with the score settled, the debt paid and the law satisfied, we shall want to have nothing more to do with it.

- John Stott, "The Bible Speaks Today"

*From the ESV study Bible

“Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God – he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honour, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he ploughed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!”

- Hebrews 12:1b – 3 (msg)

So we have looked at where we came from, what ruined that and now the amazing place we stand in Jesus. But what do we do now? Just sit back and do nothing? Paul is quite emphatic that this is no way the case. God loves us so much that He doesn't want us to stay the way we are, but be transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ. This HAS to be rooted in grace, otherwise it will quickly turn against us to condemn us the moment we slip up, and we will. So, lets take a look at living a life of grace...

Prayer

“We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding. Then the way you live will always honour and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father. He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to his people, who live in the light. For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.”

Prepare

Spend some time reading over Chapter 6 a few times. Maybe try it in a few different translation. What are the main things that come mind as you read?

Think about yourself and the people you know. What benefits do people often think they reap from self-serving deeds?

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Dead & Alive: Chapter 6 verses 1 - 10

- What is it to be “united in Christ”?

We are united/joined with Christ.

- What are some of the results of this fact according to this passage?

We are also raised to a new life.

- What do you think this new life looked like for the original readers of the letter? (see v4+5)
- What does it mean to be “united in Christ” in relation to (i) sin and (ii) God?
 - ◉ What does it look like for you, today? What should it look like?

Slaves: Chapter 6 verses 11 - 23

Look at the tenses used when talking about sin and us – it’s all past tense.

- What is the significance of the “Master and slave” analogy that Paul uses?

Verse 10 declares we HAVE died to sin and we WERE raised with Christ. We don’t fluctuate back and forwards according to “how good” we are.

- What does this mean in practice for the life of a follower of Christ?
- What does it mean to have “sin reign” in you (verse 12)?
- What is the importance of the word “consider”?

“Faith is not only necessary to salvation, it is also necessary to live a life pleasing to God. Faith enables us to claim the promises of God – but it also enables us to obey the commands of God. Faith enables us to obey when obedience is costly or even seems unreasonable to the natural mind.”
- Jerry Bridges, “The Pursuit of Holiness”

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We are under God’s mastership. We are to live out of love of what Christ has done first for us and the love the Father has for us, not to not sin for the sake of it, but to live a life that is pleasing to God.

- ◉ Where does sin “reign” in you?
- ◉ What practical steps might you need to take to not allow sin to reign? (this is not merely a list making exercise of things to impress God or rules to live by, but ways in which we can live in more in the reality of what this passage is speaking of)
- ◉ If we offer ourselves to God knowing we are dead to sin and righteous in life, what will this look like in your life?

Spirit, Heirs & Future Glory: Chapter 8

You will be glad to find out that we’re not going to ask you study this as well. Take ten or fifteen minutes and read through Romans 8 a few times.

As you do, pray and reflect over what you have gotten to know or relearn about God and His character and your position before Him as a dearly loved child who has the power of Christ’s saving grace in your life each day.

- Tell God what you are thankful for. He delights in His children praising His name...
- Tell Him what you don’t understand. He will fill you with spiritual knowledge...
- Tell Him where you find it difficult to live it out. He will help...

Finally, as a group, read out chapter 8 to each other as a prayer for each other and as praise to God as you are reading aloud great and glorious truths about God the creator, king, judge, father and saviour.