

Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: A 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God

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Day 20

IF YOU WILL ONLY

Three years ago, I had an experience which, quite frankly, surprised me. David had begun a series in Ephesians and was finishing up teaching Chapter 2 by reviewing both chapters. He listed one thing after another that God accomplished in Christ. The list was amazing enough, but he finished his sermon by saying, “And all these things are YOURS!”

Even after many years of learning and believing and knowing deep in my heart that all of those things are mine by grace through faith alone as a gift from God, I caught my mind adding, “...if **you** will only—” This demonstrated to me the power of “another” gospel; of adding law to grace; or more specifically in this case, that of adding conditions to grace. So accustomed was I to having every blessing of God connected to an action of mine that even after all of those years of knowing better, I was waiting for the boom to be lowered. I sat there stunned with my mouth open, amazed that the idea of earned provision still lurked in the back of my mind and again rejoicing that all of these things are indeed ours as a gift from God, not based on anything we do, but on what Jesus Himself accomplished.

Why is it so difficult for us to *receive* gifts from God? Why do we keep insisting that we must “do our part” (pay) in order to receive them, maintain them, or improve them?

Part of this is due to the world in which we live, one that is based on our basic recipe for success: work hard and receive what we deserve/earn for our labors. As children, we “behave” at home and receive rewards from our parents, and if we disobey, we are punished. Why, even Santa supposedly gives to us based on whether we are “naughty or nice.” We study diligently in college and earn good grades and eventually a degree. We work hard at our jobs and merit a raise and a promotion for our faithfulness and hard work. We greatly admire someone who “pulls himself up by the bootstraps.” We do good things for others, expecting that they will return the favor. We follow the laws and stay out of jail. There’s a general societal agreement that when things go wrong, it must in some way, perhaps indirectly, be our fault or we are “getting what we deserve.” If good comes to someone we know and love, we think, “It couldn’t have happened to nicer people.” If that boat gets rocked and someone who clearly doesn’t deserve a break gets one, we are privately perturbed. Or if something awful happens to someone

nice, we are baffled as to why.¹

Then along comes Jesus announcing glad tidings of good things, “Whoever *believes* in Me will not perish, but have everlasting life.”

“Believe” means, of course, “to have faith”.² By God’s grace through faith, we receive everything Jesus died to accomplish. We cannot earn these things because they are gifts. We can only receive them. If we could work for them, then they would cease to be gifts and be wages instead, something we deserve.

Romans 4:4-5

*Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵ But to him who does not work but **believes** on Him who justifies the **ungodly**, his **faith** is accounted for righteousness.*

Christianity is the *only* religion based on God’s grace. All other religions are based on what the individual does and the hope that their diligent efforts will someday pay off.

What Christ did was good enough. We need not and cannot add to it. It needn’t be “balanced” with our own labors.³ Everything we have and everything we are is a gift to us by grace alone through faith in Him alone. This is contrary to all the principles of the world, and it offends the religious mind to its core! It goes against all religions, and I’m sad to say, it goes against the prevailing teachings in the “Christian” church today.

How long will we continue to adopt the world’s system of “work hard and be rewarded” instead of embracing what only God could have designed—a relationship with Him based on His grace alone received by human beings who can *never* be good enough and *never* do enough good to deserve it and thus must rely solely on faith in the grace of God to receive it?

We need to wake up and see that our relationship with God is already as good as God declares it to be. We need to realize that there is a reason we have this sense we can never be good enough. It’s because we can’t have a relationship with God in our own power or through our own

¹ The question isn’t, “Why do bad things happen to good people?” but rather, “Why do bad things happen?” for bad things happen to all. The world is fallen, full of disease, driven by evil forces, and affected by people making wrong choices. That is why bad things happen. Consider this seldom asked question, “Why do good things happen?” Good things happen to all because God causes the sun to rise and the rain to fall (both blessings) on all people. “Every good and perfect gift” comes from Him and there are many who are His who do His will which is to love others. This is why good things happen to all.

² In English, we don’t have a verb for faith (i.e. “faithing”). The verb for faith is believe. To have faith = to believe; faith = belief. Keeping this in mind helps us to better understand “faith”.

³ We do good works BECAUSE of what we’ve been given, not to obtain.

discipline, let alone “deserve” one. Our closeness with God and everything we receive from Him is based solely on what Jesus did, not on what we do. This is the rest we were promised. It is why our yoke is “easy,” and our burden is “light”.

Let these truths sink into your heart. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves holy and righteous before the living God that would ever be good enough. Only by His grace through faith in His Son can we ever be what we are needlessly trying to become. We must cease from our labors and enter His rest. When we finally do, we find again the joy of our salvation. We rediscover our first love. We are able to breathe in and enjoy this LIFE He promised, and the fruit that we previously worked so hard to produce will simply happen. Sin that might be tormenting us will drop like scales as it did in the beginning of our walk. When we finally understand that “It is finished!” we can stop wasting our time and energy trying to accomplish what we’ve already been given and finally be free from “If **you** will only...”