

## GLORIFY GOD THROUGH YOUR WORKS

- A. Introduction: The Bible gives us a lot of information about world conditions just prior to the return of Jesus Christ. A hallmark of those years will be religious deception, leading to a worldwide acceptance of a false Christ (antichrist) who will preside over a false religion. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24; Rev 13; II Thess 2:3-9; etc.
1. These conditions are already setting up as the world increasingly abandons Judeo-Christian ethics and the Bible is being written off as an outdated, bigoted, sexist book of myths.
    - a. The gospel of Jesus Christ is being altered and His Person and work (Who He is and why He came to earth) are being misrepresented like never before—even by those who profess to be Christians.
    - b. Therefore, we are taking time to look at Who Jesus is, why He came into this world, and the message He preached—according to the Bible—so that we will be protected from deception.
      1. For the past few weeks we've been focusing on the fact that in recent years there's been a huge explosion in teaching on grace in the Church. While some of it is good, much of it is inaccurate and has led to wrong conclusions drawn by those unfamiliar with sound Bible doctrine. In some quarters, grace has become an excuse for sinful living.
      2. We can't address every erroneous statement made about grace. But we can look at the genuine message of grace presented in the Bible to help us better recognize inaccurate teaching.
  2. There's a lot of misunderstanding connected with the words works and grace. People say that because we are now under grace, there are no works that we must do. In fact, some say, if anyone tells you that, as a Christian, there are things you must do, they are trying to put you back under the Law. Don't do it!
    - a. In the last lesson, we began to examine what the words grace and works mean according to the New Testament. (We'll get to the Law in an upcoming lesson.)
      1. Works means a deed or an act or something you do. Grace means favor or goodwill. Grace is used for the unearned, undeserved favor God shows in saving us from sin through the Cross.
      2. When works and grace are coupled together, we see this contrast: We are saved from sin by God's grace and not by our own works or efforts. Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5; II Tim 1:9
    - b. We are all guilty of sin before a holy God and deserve eternal separation from Him. There is no effort, no action—no works we can do—that will rectify our condition and situation. Almighty God, motivated by love, chose to deal with us in grace and do for us what we cannot do for ourselves — save us from our sin through the sacrifice of Christ at the Cross.
  3. But that's not all the New Testament says Titus 2:14—Jesus gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people (His own possession), zealous of good works. Works are a part of Christian life—not as a means of earning or deserving God's blessing or help, but as outward expressions of inward changes. We continue our discussion in this lesson.
- B. As with every topic, grace and works must be understood in terms of the big picture. God created human beings to become His holy, righteous sons and daughters through faith in Christ. Eph 1:4-5
1. When the first man (Adam) sinned, the entire human race resident in him was affected. Men became sinners by nature (Rom 5:19; Eph 2:3). A holy God cannot have sinners as sons and daughters. But Jesus came to pay the price for sin so that we can be restored to our created purpose.
    - a. When a person acknowledges Jesus as Savior and Risen Lord, the cleansing power of His blood wipes out the debt we owed for our sins and redeems or frees us from the just penalty of our sin.
      1. This cleansing provides more for us than the clearing of the slate by wiping out the record of our sins—although it certainly does. Col 2:14
      2. Once we're justified (declared not guilty of sin) it opens the way for the Holy Spirit to transform sinners into sons through regeneration or new birth. Titus 3:5; John 3:3-5 (lit: born from above)

- b. When we believe on Jesus, we receive life from God—eternal life. Eternal life is not “live forever” life. All humans already have “live forever” life in the sense that none of us cease to exist at death. Every human being lives forever. The only question is where—in Heaven or in Hell.
  - 1. Eternal life is the life of God—the uncreated life in God. The entrance of this life regenerates (gives life to) our dead human spirit (Eph 2:1) and transforms our nature from sinner to son.
  - 2. I John 5:1; John 1:12-13—We are literally born of God and become partakers of His life and nature: And become sharers (partakers) of the divine nature (II Pet 1:4, Amp). (Nature is the same word as Eph 2:3; from a word that means the constitution of a person, *Vine’s Dictionary*).
  - 3. In Eph 4 Paul urged Christians to make sure that the inward changes show up on the outside (lessons for another day). In doing so, he gives us insight into our new nature. Eph 4:24—And put on the new nature (the regenerated self) created in God’s image (Godlike) in true righteousness and holiness (Amp); which is created to resemble God, with the righteousness and holiness springing from the Truth (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); which is created to be like God (Beck).
- 2. Through the new birth we are united to the life in God, the life in Jesus. We have union with Christ.
  - a. In John 3:16, the words “believeth in him” have the idea of believe into him. When we believe on Jesus, the Holy Spirit unites our spirit with the life in Jesus—eternal life. I John 5:11-12
  - b. The New Testament uses three word pictures to help us understand our relationship to Jesus: vine and branch (John 15:5); head and body (Eph 1:22-23); husband and wife (Eph 5:25-32). All of them depict union and shared life.
    - 1. This union with Christ through the entrance of eternal life by the power of the Holy Spirit is now the basis of our identity—we are sons and daughters of God, born of Him.
    - 2. I Cor 1:30—But you, by your union with Christ Jesus, are God’s offspring; and Christ, by God’s will, became not only our Wisdom, but also our Righteousness, our Holiness, our Deliverance (20<sup>th</sup> Cent)
  - c. We see the phrase “in Christ” used repeatedly in the New Testament, especially in Paul’s epistles. It can be and, in many translations, is rightly translated “in union with”.
    - 1. Acts 9:1-6—When Jesus appeared to Saul (who became Paul), he was an ardent persecutor of Christians. Jesus’ first words to Paul were: Why are you persecuting Me (v4). Jesus is aware of our union with Him, even if we aren’t.
    - 2. Jesus appeared to Paul a number of times after this and personally taught the apostle the message that he preached (Acts 26:16; Gal 1:11-12).
      - A. Col 1:25-28—Jesus specifically commissioned Paul to preach this previously unrevealed part of God’s plan for His family—Christ in you through shared life. This is how the Infinite God has chosen to interact with finite human beings.
      - B. God’s plan was and is to indwell us by His life, by His Spirit. You are so cleansed by Jesus’ blood that God can now indwell you. And you are so transformed inwardly that He can call you His son.
      - C. God’s plan was and is to indwell us by His life, by His Spirit. Christ in us is our hope of glory, the basis on which we can expect a full, complete restoration to what God always intended us to be (more on this in a moment).
- 3. Jesus is the pattern for God’s family. Rom 8:29—For those whom He foreknew—of whom He was aware and loved beforehand—He also destined from the beginning (foreordaining them) to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the first-born among many brethren (Amp).
  - a. Jesus did not come into existence in the womb of Mary. He has always existed because He is God. At His incarnation, He took on a full human nature. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. He is the God-man. John 1:1; John 1:14

1. While on earth, Jesus did not live as God. He put aside His rights and privileges as God and lived as a man in dependence on God as His Father. John 5:26; John 14:10; Acts 10:38; etc.
  2. In doing so, He became our example of what sons of God look like and how they live. I John 2:6
    - A. To be conformed to the image of Christ does not mean that we become Jesus. It means we become like Jesus in His humanity—like Him in character and power, holiness and love.
  - B. We become the sons and daughters that God always intended us to be—fully glorifying, completely pleasing to Him in every thought, word, and action—in all of our works.
  - c. You were created to express your Father through your works (your actions) just as Jesus did (John 9:4; John 10:25; 32; 37; etc.). Works are a part of Christian life—not as a means of earning or deserving God's help and blessing, but as an outward expression of inward changes. Works are part of our created purpose, our destiny.
    1. Eph 2:10—God ordained or planned before He created the earth what we would live in a particular way—a way that expresses and glorifies Him. It is through God's grace (gift) of salvation that we have become His workmanship, created through our union with Christ **unto** (literally) **for** good works.
    2. Eph 2:10—Creating us through our union with Christ Jesus for the life of goodness which He has predestined us to live (Goodspeed); as he has prepared beforehand to be the employment of our lives (Knox).
    3. Our works are intended to bring glory to God. Matt 5:16—Let your light so shine before men that they may see your moral excellence and your praiseworthy, noble and good deeds, and recognize and honor and praise and glorify your Father Who is in heaven. (Amp)
- C. Man is a triune being—spirit, soul, and body. Only our spirit is directly changed when we are born again. Our soul (mental and emotional faculties) and our body are not changed.
1. The new birth is the beginning of a process that will ultimately transform every part of being and fully cleanse them of corruption (lessons for another day).
    - a. Right now, we are instructed to bring our body and soul under the control of our new nature by presenting our bodies to God and renewing our mind (Rom 12:1-2). These are lessons for another day. But consider several thoughts.
      1. Jesus gave Himself up to death on the Cross—not to make it okay to sin or to fix it so that God is no longer bothered by our sin—but to completely remove it and its effects from every part of our being.
      2. Titus 2:11-12—God's grace that brings salvation teaches us: to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. (NIV)
        - A. We must choose or exercise our will and surrender to Him as Lord and Master. We must know that we now have power to live godly lives by the indwelling presence of God by His Spirit and life. We must get instructions from His Word on how we are supposed to live.
        - B. II Cor 3:18—And all of us, as with unveiled face, [because we] continued to behold [in the Word of God] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are constantly being transfigured into His very own image in ever increasing splendor and from one degree of glory to another; [for this comes] from the Lord [Who is] the Spirit. (Amp)
    - b. We need the help of God in us (Christ by His Spirit and life) and we need direction from the Word of God as to how we are to live now that we are sons of God. Consider these statements.
      1. II Thess 2:13—From the beginning God chose you to be saved through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth. (NIV). Jesus gave Himself to sanctify the church (Eph 5:26). Sanctify means to cleanse and purify.
      2. I Thess 4:3—For this is God's purpose (will), that you should be pure (20<sup>th</sup> Cent); separated and

set apart for pure and holy living (Amp).

A. Paul had already exhorted these people that they should walk worthy of the Lord (I Thess 2:12). Worthy means appropriately.

B. In the context of a list of specific things (behaviors) they were and were not to do (works) Paul made it clear that God's will for them (and us) was and is separation from evil.

3. I Thess 5:23—This is a greeting, but a prayer—that they would be cleansed or sanctified in every part of their being: progressive sanctification. It has to do with works or actions as you learn how to live and act in a Christ-like way—in thought, word, and action.

2. Through the new birth we are holy in nature but not yet completely holy in action (works). But that should be our goal. We're finished works in progress—fully God's sons and daughters, but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ in every part of our being. I John 3:2

a. Because of God's gift (grace) of salvation through Christ, we are sanctified. Heb 10:10—And in accordance with this will [of God] we have been made holy (consecrated and sanctified) through the offering made once for all the Body of Jesus Christ. (Amp)

1. Heb 10:14—For with a single offering He has forever perfected those who are being made holy. (Berkeley). Note that there is a finished part and a part in process.

2. Perfected means to complete, to accomplish. It has the idea of make perfect by reaching the intended goal or to bring to a full end. You are now a holy, righteous son of God. And, the process of conformity to Him will be completed as you stay faithful to Him.

b. We still sin because we are not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ. But sin doesn't break our union with Him. (We'll discuss all of this in more detail in later lessons.)

1. If your heart's desire is to please God, then you can be certain that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it. Phil 1:6

2. What you do doesn't change what you are. But what you are (a holy, righteous son of God) will ultimately change what you do.

3. If your sin bothers you (although that can be quite unpleasant at times), it is an indication that your heart is different. You've been made new on the inside.

3. Consider one more statement as we close. Jesus took on flesh (became fully man) so that He could identify with us and die in our place for our sins. In that context Paul made an amazing statement.

a. Heb 2:11—For both He who is purifying them and those who are being purified all spring from one Father so He is not ashamed to call them brothers (Williams); are all of one—have all one Father (Conybeare); are all of one stock (NEB); are all of one family (Basic); are all of one origin (Moffatt)

b. For this reason He is not ashamed to speak of them as brothers (Weymouth); to own them as his brethren (Knox; does not shrink from calling men his brothers (NEB).

D. Conclusion: If you truly understand what grace is then it has taught you to desire to do the works of God—for His glory and for the good of His family. Lots more next week!!