'Is Grace Risky? YES.'

Monday, October 17, 2022

SCRIPTURES:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace [a gift] ***and may be guaranteed...."*** Romans 4:16

KEY POINT:

Is Grace Risky? In some ways, yes.

READING:

So far in this series, we've established this principle: **The only way we become acceptable to God is by faith.** And why did God choose faith as the means of salvation? Paul says it was to demonstrate God's grace. Romans 4:16 - ***"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed...."*** Notice the word ***'promise'*** here. When God makes a promise, it's guaranteed. And this promise is not based upon your performance. God doesn't say: *If you keep working, I'll keep saving.* No. You accept it by faith and it's yours, whether you ever perform or not!

Salvation comes by faith ***"... so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed…"*** You've been given a written guarantee by God. Once you exercise faith, you're saved – for good – that's a promise. Now if your acceptance *was* based on your performance, how could you ever be certain that you were going to be saved? You couldn't. You'd always be wondering: *Have I done enough? What if I sin and all of a sudden die in the middle of that sin?* You'd live in a constant fear of: *I wonder if I'm doing enough?*

Now that leads us to today's main question: **Is grace risky?** Well the answer is ***yes***, and ***no***. In this message, I explained why the answer is **yes**. And next week, I'm going to tell you why the answer is **no**. Some of it depends on how you define the term risky. Today, what I mean by **'Is grace risky?'** is this: **Can a person take advantage of God's grace? Can a person put their faith in Jesus, get their fire insurance, then live however they feel like on this earth, and still go to heaven?** Yes. Unequivocally, yes! Anytime you give someone a free gift, they can take it and be appreciative and reciprocate some kind of kindness. Or… they can just take the gift and not really appreciate the giver or the value of the gift, right? They can even misuse the gift, neglect the gift… whatever.

You've all seen this happen in life. Back when I was in high school, I knew kids whose parents were very wealthy and bought them a super expensive, brand new, fancy sports car as soon as they got their license. But because it was free to them, they didn't really take care of it - they'd burn up the engine, trash out the interior, drive recklessly, crash into things, and so forth. It was free to them, so they didn't treat is with the value it deserved. So yes… there is always a danger when you give a gift.

QUESTION:

In what way have you seen people take advantage of God's free gift of salvation by grace?

APPLICATION:

Pray and ask God to reveal to you whether you've treated his grace with less than the value it deserves. If so, confess that to God and take steps to be more grateful for His mercy and grace in your life.

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

SCRIPTURE:
'What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means. Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slave to the one whom you obey; whether you are slaves to sin which leads to death or obedience which leads to righteousness.' Romans 6:15-16

KEY POINT:
Just because we're saved by grace, doesn't mean we should just live however we please.

READING:
So… is it possible for a Christian to receive God's free gift of forgiveness and salvation from hell, and not treat it with the value it deserves? Absolutely. It may not be the norm in the Christian life, but God won't revoke the gift of going to heaven from that person. God freely invites you into his family… and the moment you believe in Jesus, He adopts you into His family. And He won't ever kick you out. Ever.

Now some people worry that that makes God a sucker. They'll say that preaching that kind of grace and salvation gives people permission to do all kinds of terrible things and still get all the good stuff from God. They say things like: *'Well, that's too easy. That's cheap grace.' 'If a person has **real** faith, then they'll automatically live differently. And if they don't show enough good works, they're not truly saved.'*

Folks, we may be worried about these issues, but apparently God was not. In fact, God anticipated this question in advance and addressed it head on through the Apostle Paul in the book of Romans. Paul was doing such a good job of preaching the gospel of grace - that you're saved by believing in Jesus and not doing any works, that he was accused of the same thing we get accused of today as believers in Free Grace.

Paul just finished telling the Jews that they no longer had to follow the OT laws, so the natural question that would pop into the reader's mind, was this: *If we're no longer bound by all these laws, why not just cast off all restraint and do whatever we please?* It's a fair question and Paul's answer is very telling - not just because of what Paul says, but also for what he doesn't say. Listen to Romans 6:15-16 - ***'What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means. Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slave to the one whom you obey; whether you are slaves to sin which leads to death or obedience which leads to righteousness.'*** Paul is saying something very profound. He's saying that we as human beings end up being controlled or mastered by whatever we indulge in.

So if you choose to indulge in sin, sin will become your master. That's a sobering thought, isn't it? Like the famous song writer Bob Dylan once said: *'You're going to have to serve somebody. It may be the devil, it may be the Lord, but you're going to have to serve somebody.'*

QUESTION:
Have you ever seen someone get so caught up in a sin that it ended up taking control of their life?

APPLICATION:
Think about an area of your life where you struggle with sin. How can you offer yourself to God in this area and ask for His help to overcome this struggle?

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

SCRIPTURES:
You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness. I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:18-23

KEY POINT:
As believers our sin doesn't lead to hell, but it does lead to pain and separation (death).

READING:
If you choose to indulge in sin, sin will become your master. You will be mastered by something in life - either by sin or by the Lord. Read the passage above one more time.

Sin always leads to death, Paul says. Now you need to understand that the word *death* here, means *'separation'* - separation from God and separation from others. Have you ever noticed that when you sin, you feel guilty… like your fellowship with God has been affected? The Bible says it has. You haven't lost your position in His family, but until you confess that sin, there's a bit of separation between you and God. I John 1:9 explains this process of confessing (admitting) your sin so you can get back into a good relationship with God. ***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*** Likewise, when we sin against other people, it damages our relationship with them… it leads to some sort of separation in our fellowship with them. That's part of what Paul means when he says our sin leads to "death."

Sin also leads to feelings of shame and guilt. So Paul says: *'What **lasting** benefits do you really gain from sin?'* Thing about that. The answer is… none. Short -term thrill, long-term remorse. So why would you want to go back to that way of life? Now that you're free from all the condemnation, guilt and shame the law and sin put on you, why would you want to heap those things back into your life by choosing to indulge in sin? Look at verse 22: ***"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** The very reason Christ came to this earth and died on the cross, was to put sin to death and rescue you from it's clutches. You have the power of the Holy Spirit living in you, so you no longer have to give in to sin. You don't have to be a slave to the whole cycle of sin and guilt and death. Instead, focused on being a slave to righteousness and holiness - and living out the abundant life that is yours in Christ.

QUESTION:
Think of a time when you sinned against someone and experienced separation (death) in your relationship with them. Were you able to resolve the tension and renew your fellowship with them?

APPLICATION:
Ask God to reveal any sin that may be causing distance in your relationship with Him and others. Then confess that sin and seek reconciliation.

Thursday, October 20, 2022

SCRIPTURE:
'What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? By no means. Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slave to the one whom you obey; whether you are slaves to sin which leads to death or obedience which leads to righteousness.' Romans 6:15-16

KEY POINT:
Paul *never* says that if we sin too much we lose our salvation and/or prove we're not truly believers.

READING:
Paul's reasoning for why we should no longer sin is because it hurts us, *not* that it'll show we're not true believers. If you ask people: *Why should a believer who is living under grace, avoid sin?* Many will say: *'because they'd be in danger of losing their salvation if they sin too much.'* Or the more subtle version of that same line of thinking is: *'because a whole lot of sin shows they never were saved in the first place.'*

But Paul doesn't say that here – not even close. It would've been a whole lot easier! He could've saved several chapters in Romans just by declaring that a person who continues to sin is simply showing he never really was a believer in the first place. In fact, the questions: *'shall we sin so grace may abound?'* or *'shall we sin because we're no longer under the law?'* would be ludicrous to even bring up, unless there was the potential for a believer to live in habitual sin. It's further evidence that grace is a free gift, with no strings attached. The great preacher, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, who once spent 12 years preaching through the book of Romans, made this poignant remark. **"There is no better test as to whether a man is really preaching the NT gospel of salvation than this – that some people might misunderstand and misinterpret it to mean that because you are saved by grace alone, it does not matter at all what you do: you can go on sinning as much as you like because it will redound all the more to the glory of grace. That's a very good test of gospel preaching. Let me show you what I mean. If a man preaches justification by works, no one would ever raise this question. If a man's preaching is: *'If you want to be Christians and go to heaven, you must stop committing sins, you must take up good works, and if you do so regularly and constantly, you will reconcile yourselves to God and go to heaven.'* Obviously a man who preaches in that strain would never be liable to this misunderstanding. Nobody would say to such a man: *'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound,'* because his whole emphasis is this - that if you go on sinning you are certain to be damned, and only if you stop sinning can you save yourselves. So that misunderstanding could never arise.**

Nobody has ever brought this charge against the Church of Rome, but it was precisely what the Church of Rome said about the preaching of Martin Luther. They said: *'This man who was a priest has changed the doctrine in order to justify his own marriage and his own lust. This man is an antinomian; and a heretic.'* It's the charge that formal dead Christianity has always brought against this startling, staggering message, that God *'justifies the ungodly.'* I would say to all preachers: *If your preaching of salvation has not been misunderstood in that way, then you had better examine your sermons again and make sure that you really are preaching the salvation that is offered in the NT to the ungodly, the sinner, those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and those who are enemies of God.* There is this kind of dangerous element about the true presentation of the doctrine of salvation."

To Martyn Lloyd-Jones, grace was not only risky, it was downright dangerous – because people can take advantage of it. But taking advantage of God's grace only applies to your eternal destination - heaven or hell. In every other area of life, God promises that you will reap what you sow.

QUESTION:
What about Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones comment stands out to you the most?

APPLICATION:
Thank God for promising that nothing can separate you from His love once you are His child.

Friday, October 21, 2022

SCRIPTURE:
"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed - a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" Romans 1:16-17

"Clearly no one who relies on the law is justified before God, because 'the righteous will live by faith.' The law is not based on faith…" Gal. 3:11-12

KEY POINT:
God designed salvation to be by faith alone because it was the best, and only, way to redeem us.

READING:
When it comes to salvation and the topic of heaven and hell, sometimes people wonder: *Why did God set the gospel up this way? Why is salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone?* Well first of all, if our salvation was based on works, we would never stand a chance. We could never be good enough for a perfect, holy God. Second, God doesn't want anyone bragging in heaven. Listen to Ephesians 2:8-9 ***– "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."*** There will be no boasting in heaven. So if your good deeds had anything to do with it – before or after you put your faith in Jesus, there would be room for boasting. God doesn't want that.

Another reason we are saved by faith is because faith pleases God like nothing else. Think about it. More than anything else, do you want your children to obey simply because *"I said so"*? Or would you prefer they obey you because they trust you? We want our kids to believe in us, to have faith in us, to trust us. So God designed salvation from heaven and hell to be by faith. But he also designed the entire Christian walk to be by faith. We come to Jesus by faith, but we also grow in Jesus by faith. It's not like we start by faith, and then eek out our daily Christian life in our own power. No, we rely, by faith, on the Holy Spirit's power. Salvation starts and ends with faith. Re-read the Scriptures above.

A final reason salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, is because grace and love motivate us to live for God more than the law and guilt does. In II Corinthians 5:14, the Apostle Paul says: ***"For Christ's love compels us."*** When it comes to wooing people to live life God's way, grace is a much more powerful tool than the law. Grace touches our hearts and inspires us to serve God out of love and gratitude - rather than out of fear and duty. Love and grace are the most powerful, inspiring forces in the universe. And God proved that, in Jesus.

Here's the beauty of the gospel – it's absolutely free. And that means it's totally in opposition to the law. The law demands that you work for what you get – God's grace comes free of charge, simply by faith. The law condemns you – grace justifies you. The law keeps you in bondage - grace gives you absolute freedom. The law cannot and will not transform you - but the grace of Jesus Christ can turn your life upside down and change you from the inside out. Law and grace are night and day; works and faith are night and day. So praise God that we can say with Paul: ***"sin will not be my master, because I am not under the law but under grace."*** (Romans 6:14)

QUESTION:
Think about a time when someone trusted you and followed your advice. How did that make you feel?

APPLICATION:
Make a commitment to trust God even when circumstances in your life make that difficult.