

Grace and Obedience

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Introduction

1. The religious world has seemingly pitted grace and obedience against one another as mutually exclusive—i.e., claiming one must either choose to accept God's grace or else attempt to secure one's salvation by personal righteousness alone.
2. The New Testament presents a more complementary picture.

I. Amazing Need – Our Condition Apart from Christ (Eph. 2:1-4)

- A. We are dead (v.1).
 1. When Scripture talks about death, the emphasis is on separation.
 - (a) Separation of the body from the soul or spirit (e.g. Jas. 2:26)
 - (b) Separation of the person from God (Gen. 2:17)
 2. Only God could look at a dead person and see opportunity for things to get better!
 3. We need resurrection, not recuperation. We cannot do this for ourselves!
- B. We are disobedient (v. 2).
 1. The behavior we display is the result of our separation from God.
 2. We don't fix the behavior to fix the problem – restoration of relationship is the only solution and we are powerless to accomplish that (remember, we are dead!).
- C. We are, therefore, doomed (v. 3).
 1. This is a universal problem (Rom. 3:23).
 2. The consequences of this are profound (Rom. 6:23).

II. Amazing God – Reaching Out to His Enemies (Eph. 2:4-9)

- A. Through God's power, death is not necessarily final! He can (and wants to) fix that.
 1. Value is assigned to us by God.
 - (a) A twenty-dollar bill is printed on paper that is worth less than one cent, but we assign greater value to it. Further, if the note is dirty, wrinkled or torn, it is not worth less!
 - (b) Likewise, God values us – not due to our inherent worth but because He loves us. He continues to love us and assign value to us even when we are dirty and broken.
 2. Doom is indeed impending but final judgment has not been handed down.
- B. God took the initiative (v. 4).
 1. Perhaps two of the most powerful words in Scripture – *BUT GOD!*
 2. See Romans 5:8 – “But God shows His love for us...while we were sinners...Christ died for us.”
- C. Because of *His* great love!

III. Amazing Works (Eph. 2:10)

- A. Verse 10 completes the connection between grace and obedience.
 1. Works to earn salvation are an exercise in futility (vs. 8-9).
 2. However, the work of God in and through us fulfills His intention for our lives and is the appropriate and essential means of accepting His grace.
 3. It is the very thing for which He designed us!
- B. In Romans chapter 5, the Apostle Paul culminates a line of reasoning designed to highlight the futility of an attempt to earn salvation through adherence to the Law of Moses.
 1. The argument grows stronger and stronger as grace is presented as doing what works of the Law never could – abounding more and more as man's need demands it (5:20).
 2. Anticipating the inappropriate response of some, Paul asks the rhetorical question in 6:1, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound?”
 3. His own response – “By no means! We died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?” – highlights both the connection and the tension between grace and obedience.

4. Again, a life of obedience is the only consistent path so that “sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom. 6:14).

Conclusion

1. The oft-expressed dichotomy between grace and obedience is a man-made construct.
2. Scripture provides a model wherein a life of service to God is the natural expression of a soul who wishes to experience and express God’s grace!