

Living by Faith in Future Grace - Lesson 1

by John Piper

Living by faith in future grace is the key to experiencing true joy and holiness in God.

Duration: 1:15:43

Scripture: Psalm 34:19-20, Jeremiah 10:23, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, James 2:17, James 3:1, 1 John 2:4

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Christian Living"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of serving God by leaning on His provision and strength. He references 1 Peter 4:11 to explain that serving God is not like being a slave, but rather it involves depending on and living by the strength that God supplies. The speaker shares his passion for bringing glory to God and experiencing joy in the Christian life. He also mentions how he has seen people deeply moved and impacted by these teachings, particularly when he speaks outside of his church.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org At the beginning of this course on living by faith in future grace, here as part of the Bethlehem Institute, Jeremiah chapter 10. This is just off my front burner from my devotions this morning.

Verse 23. I know, O Lord, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps. I think the older you get, the more you realize that.

Because as I look over my 52 years and the structure of its route, there's no way it was in me to plan this life. If you had asked Gene Lawrence, my pastor under whom I sat for my growing up years, who is now in heaven, will Johnny Piper be the pastor of a Yankee church of about 1,300 or 1,400 with five kids and writing books and standing in front of big groups and talking, he would have said, if the dead rise. And the dead do rise.

But it wasn't in me to plan this life. And I look back with tremendous gratitude. The next verse says, correct me, O Lord, but in just measure, not in thy anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.

And I prayed that earnestly this morning because I've written books. And once you write books, many people perceive you as impervious to correction because then you'd have to change the books. And that's scary to lead ten thousands of people astray and then go back.

At the end of his life, Augustine wrote a book called Retractions. And I may have to do that someday. And one of the values of a class like this is that I lay myself open to interact with real people as to the validity of the things I have tried to think through.

So I pray, correct me, O Lord, in just measure, not in thy anger, lest you bring me to nothing. So the Lord knows the measure which we all need correction. So what will happen in this class is that we'll all be challenged to think perhaps a little differently than we had thought.

Let me pray that God would give us the grace now to yield to truth. Father, we're gathered here to meet you and learn from you in your Word. What I have to say out of my own head is of very little significance and will be blown away by the wind like chaff.

But if I bring my mind and my words and my heart, and we all do, into accord with your written, infallible Word, then we will become like trees planted by streams of water that send down their roots into the granite, unshakable boulders of grace and truth. And our limbs will go up in praise into the skies, and the fruit of love will come out on our branches, and the needy people we live with and want to minister to will be able to eat and be refreshed, and our lives will have meaning, and we will last forever. Even if we are cut down in the middle of our years, we will last forever.

So Father, we are about some big, big things now in these issues of how to live by faith in future grace, and so be purified, and bring glory to you, and experience joy ourselves, and gain the holiness without which we will not see the Lord. So draw near, I pray, and help me and help us. We need alertness at the end of a long day, and we need energy.

We need your Spirit's empowering. So come, I pray, and guard us from the evil one, and for those who brought into the room heavy things, a real dangerously sick loved one, or some really bad news about a relationship, or a car broke down today, or a class hasn't gone right, I pray for freedom of mind, that they would be able to roll their burdens onto you like Psalm 55:20 says. In Jesus' name I pray.

Amen. Before I even get into the outline, I want to pay tribute to my father. People often ask me, how did you come up with this theology called Christian hedonism, or living by faith in future grace, or whatever name happens to be put on it.

And I pay a lot of tribute to Dan Fuller in 1968, and Jonathan Edwards, and C.S. Lewis, and my father maybe doesn't get the tribute that he should, so I brought along a letter that he wrote to me in 1995, and I had just sent to him the new book, Future Grace. And he dipped into it, and he wrote me this. On December 14, 1974, I was lying near death in the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Having just been rescued by a Jewish blood transfusion, I think he was real proud of that. He's got real Jewish blood in his veins now. He knows that every born again Christian is a Jew, and Jews who aren't born again are not true Jews.

These are weighty things, so he's got the whole Jewish reality now. Having just been told that a precious wife of 36 years had been crushed to death. That's my mother.

I was passing through the deepest, darkest valley in my life. In the midst of the pain and the darkness, God gave me an unusual verse. Here's the verse.

Psalm 121, verse 8. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, even forevermore. And he underlined, from this time forth. Because he understood what I meant by future grace.

And I do mean, let's just get this phrase clear right from the outset. By future grace, I do not mean the grace that is coming at the revelation of Jesus Christ only. That's a reference to 1 Peter 1.13. I mean the grace that begins right now, five seconds of which is now past, and becomes past grace.

Every minute, future grace is flowing over the waterfall of the present from the future to the past. Is that clear? Future grace begins now and extends for eternity. And living by faith in future grace doesn't just mean living by hope in the second coming or something out there five years or ten years or a million years.

It means living by faith in the grace that will get us through this two hours. Be with you tonight when you go to bed. Be with you when you get up in the morning.

Be with you on the day of your death. And be with you in ten thousand ages of years. That's what I mean by future grace.

And believing God for it is the way you become a holy person. So, my father got it. And so when he quoted me this verse, he underlined, the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

And that was his testimony to me. And that simply underlined for me a lifetime of watching my father trust in future grace. I grew up in a home where my father trusted in future grace.

And we would bow over the Word every night when he was home from his evangelistic campaigns and ask God for all the grace that he needed for financial difficulties or the grace that he needed for health difficulties or the grace that he needed for having a meeting lined up in California when there were only two and he was going to be there four weeks and he couldn't afford to be there four weeks without two more meetings. And we as a family learned to pray for grace in the future out a week or two weeks or a year. And that's the way I learned to live my life.

And so, I think my father should be given credit for much of what I think and the way I live. Now, one other thing before I jump in. Some of this is going to be touched on later, but it's okay.

I think you need the flavor of where I was coming from as I tackled this book in Georgia back in 1994, I think is when I actually wrote it down. This book is an attempt to provide an alternative to what I call the debtor's ethic or what is in its best form, and I could name names for you. In fact, choose any name you want, and they believe this just about today, that the way to live the Christian life is to look back at the grace of God in your life and to let yourself be filled up with gratitude and then to live your life by the impulse of gratitude.

And gratitude becomes the key that unlocks obedience. Almost everybody I know believes that. And I can't find it in the Bible.

I just at random took a book that was written this year. Publishers send me lots of books, so I get these books and I just put them on my shelf for future reference. And I just at random pulled a book off the shelf.

I'm not even going to tell you who wrote it because most of you would know this person, at least secondhand. And I don't want to throw any stones here because these are all godly people and they live better than they think, I think. And I'll just read you the paragraph I found on page 52 of this book.

Once in a while, I see people who seem to imply via some comment or by their lifestyle something like this, I really like this grace thing because it means that I can be headed for heaven and live like hell. This is great. They may not actually phrase it in this fashion, but you can tell that their attitude is flowing that way.

Men, women, and young people like this just don't get it. They have absolutely no understanding of genuine grace at all. I agree with this.

They have never really received it. I agree with that. If our attitude becomes one that says sin doesn't matter anymore, we have desecrated the real meaning of Christ's death and resurrection.

When we enter into the mourning of Matthew 5.4, the classic signs of grace received will be given. Gratitude, love, devotion, obedience, along with hungering and thirsting for even more righteousness. Blessed are those who mourn, for they get comfort and grace and joy.

Now here comes the key sentence. And when they receive those blessings, they come up really grateful. This gratitude becomes the driving force in the pursuit of God and godliness.

It's everywhere. You read that almost in any book on the Christian life today, and that's what you'll read. That's just standard evangelical teaching about living the Christian life.

This gratitude becomes the driving force in the pursuit of God and godliness. I wrote Future Grace to show another way to live. And I spent the first chapters called An Enemy to Future Grace, called The Debtor's Ethic, to show that I didn't agree with that.

And so we will get to that and deal with it in some detail as we go along. So, there are impulses. Now let's go to the outline.

There are impulses behind my thought and the writing of this book and my working out for myself and I hope for my children how to live the Christian life. Now, number one in the outline says, why does this matter? The passions behind faith in future grace. And there are three of them.

And I want to take a little survey here. How many came to the Desiring God or Christian Hedonism seminar two weeks ago? Raise your hand if you were at that. Okay, maybe half or so.

I could spend the whole evening defending passions one and two. 1.1 on your outline, a passion for the supremacy of God. I believe that God does everything for His own glory and has a passion for His supremacy.

And so Bethlehem's mission statement there is we exist to spread a passion for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples. That's why I'm teaching this course. That's why I preach every Sunday.

That's why I went over to the hospital to visit one of our 21-year-old guys who just discovered last night he has leukemia. And that's why I do everything I do. Jonathan Edwards put it this way, It appears that all that is ever spoken of in Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works is included in that one phrase, the glory of God, which is the name by which the ultimate end of God's works is most commonly called in Scripture

and seems most aptly to signify the thing.

Now that's the conclusion of this book which was just published, and everybody who comes to this church this Sunday morning will get a free copy of this \$18 book. So this just might tantalize a few of you visitors to show up on Sunday morning, because it was just published last week. This book with my 113 page introduction to it called God's Passion for His Glory has just been published.

And I think this is an unbelievably important book. The end for which God created the world. That's the conclusion of the book.

So Edwards devoted his life to trying to understand why God did what He did, including creation and redemption and everything else. And he concludes He did everything He did for the glory of God. That's the passion that Edwards has.

Now I usually, when I teach this course outside Bethlehem, I walk through two dozen texts to prove that, as I did with you in the Desiring God seminar. I'm not going to do that because I just preached on Romans 1.18-23 for three sermons, and the point of Romans 1.18-23, as you remember, those of you who come here, I know we have visitors who don't go to Bethlehem. That's fine.

That text, Romans 1.21-23, make it very clear that the fundamental problem of the human race is they did not glorify Him as God and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images. That's the fundamental problem because God created the universe in order for His glory to be displayed. Or you can see it at the end of Romans 11 like this, Oh, the depth of the riches, but the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways.

For who has known the mind of the Lord or who became His counselor? Or who has given to Him that He might be repaid or paid back? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Why? To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

So, I'm at 1.3 and the three texts that I was referring to there are Isaiah 48, 11, which I didn't put on, Romans 1, 18-23, which I did, and Romans 11, 33-36. Those are those three texts. So, I don't want to linger over this and belabor it.

I think it is true and I've put it in all the books and you can find it in the appendix at the back, Desire and God. You can find a longer list in the book on missions. So, there you have under 1.1.4 preliminary texts to show that living by faith in future grace highlights and magnifies the glorious all-sufficiency of God and so expresses our passion for the supremacy of God in all things.

By faith in His grace, we get the help and He gets the glory. In other words, what I'm saying in that little paragraph is if one of our passions is to bring our lives into conformity with God's passion for His supremacy, living by faith in future grace does that. So, let's give you a few texts to show you that.

Acts 17, 25, God is not served by human hands as though He needed anything since He Himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. So God wants you to find a lifestyle that calls attention to His resourcefulness, not your being something He needs. Or Jesus said, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.

So you have to find a lifestyle, a way of living that will highlight the fact that you don't serve Him, He serves you. I call that living by faith in ongoing moment-by-moment future grace. You could say future grace is the

moment-by-moment servicing of His people by Almighty God.

Servicing us moment-by-moment. That's what 1 Peter 4.11 says, Whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies, that's His moment-by-moment future grace, so that in all things God may get the glory. Now there's the connection.

I love this verse. This verse sums up so many things for me on how to live the Christian life and how God gets glory and we get the benefit and it's by leaning on His provision moment-by-moment. Awesome verse.

Learn this verse. 1 Peter 4.11 Yes, we are to serve God, but not like slaves serve plantation owners supplying slave labor without which they go bankrupt. Not at all.

Serving God means learning to lean on, depend on, drink from, live by the strength that He supplies. Why? So that He gets the glory. God is in the business of so relating to humans that He gets the glory.

If we want to come out on the good side of God so that we don't glorify His justice in hell, but His grace in heaven, faith is the difference. You're going to glorify God one way or the other. You'll either glorify His wrath and justice by suffering under it forever because of your rebellion, or you will glorify the awesome, unspeakable beauty of His grace by having trusted it for the rest of your life.

So, my point is, living by faith in future grace is the way you highlight the first passion that's driving this teaching, namely the glory of God. And there are numerous others. Those are two more.

Romans 4.20, Psalm 50.15, but I won't take any more time. Let's talk about passion number two. Let me stop there and just see if you've got that.

Clarification questions at this point. Passion number two driving this course in all my life is a passion for joy. You see that 1.2 on your outline.

And I wrote Desiring God to show that it's a biblical passion, and I just got a long list of verses here to show that you don't have an option here. Joy is not something that comes along like icing on a real good solid cake of willpower religion if it does come, but the cake is what counts. No way.

It is not icing. It's cake. Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness. That was Psalm 101. Psalm 32.11, Be glad in the Lord.

Rejoice, you righteous ones. Shout for joy. Matthew 5.12, Rejoice, be glad.

Your reward is great in heaven. And I have numerous other texts. But in this church and in this atmosphere, I'm not going to belabor that.

Whole books about it. The texts are plain. I believe God commands us to pursue our joy.

That coheres with our inborn desire for satisfaction and happiness which is to our soul what hunger is to our stomachs. You can't any more help wanting to be happy than you can help getting hungry. And the good news is that's okay.

And the gospel is, question number 1.2.2, that passion 1, God's passion for His glory, and passion 2, your passion for your joy, are not at odds. If you will find your joy in God. If you won't, they will become at odds

forever.

And that will be the end of your joy. But if you will recognize God's passion for His supremacy as the means to your joy in Him, then you will have made what I think is the greatest discovery in the universe. And so did Jonathan Edwards.

These are more quotes from that book you're going to get on Sunday if you come. Listen to Jonathan Edwards' awesome answer to this question. Are these two passions at odds? God, in seeking His glory, in seeking the good, in seeking His glory, seeks the good of His creatures.

Because the emanation of His glory implies the happiness of His creatures. And in communicating His fullness for them, He does it for Himself. Because their good, which He seeks, is so much in union and communion with Himself.

God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory. God, in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks Himself.

And in seeking Himself, that is, Himself diffused, radiant, you could say, He seeks their glory and happiness. I tell you, these were the kinds of things I was reading in the fall of 1968. Verna.

Nice and loud. Okay. The comment was, God seeks their salvation and their purification more than their happiness.

What was the last phrase? Did you say, down here? Very interesting qualification. Okay. Alright.

That is true. If you eliminate or if you equate happiness with escaping pain or escaping suffering or grief, however, it isn't true if you mean that the pursuit of our purity and the pursuit of our salvation, He pursues with greater zeal than our happiness forever because they are, in His mind, synonymous. If salvation means granting us the capacity to be ecstatically and ever increasingly happy in God forever, which is exactly what salvation is, and that's what purification is.

Purification is the cleansing of the human heart from all false pleasures and the fixing of the human heart on the one pleasure which will give it everlasting and perfect satisfaction, namely God. So, all the biblical terminology like salvation and purification and sanctification and justification and glorification, all of them have to do with becoming infinitely satisfied in God. Let me read you another one here.

Thus it is easy to conceive how God should seek the good of the creature, even his happiness, from a supreme regard to Himself. In other words, passion number one and passion number two are not at odds. As His happiness arises from the creatures exercising a supreme regard to God in beholding God's glory, in esteeming and loving it and rejoicing in it.

That's what salvation and purification are, that Werner referred to. Salvation and purification are coming to have a supreme regard to God in beholding God's glory and esteeming it and loving it and rejoicing in it. That's what the Great Commission is all about.

We do missions because that isn't happening among unreached people. My answer, all I am is a contemporary Jonathan Edwards. That's a ridiculous overstatement.

My aim is to be a contemporary Jonathan Edwards. I want to bring his teaching which nobody reads today, and I know that this book will be one of the least popular books I've ever published because it's the

hardest I've ever written. I didn't write half of it, he wrote it, and it's so hard to read his half that 95% of the people that start this will not finish it.

Therefore, I exist in order to update and simplify Jonathan Edwards or biblical religion. And the way I put it is God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him. Or, the chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever.

Isn't that a little easier to understand than those horrendous paragraphs that I just read for you? Although those are magnificent paragraphs for those of you who have the desire to dig in. So one aim of this course is to show that living by faith in future grace is the way of life that unites the passions 1 and the passions 2. A la 1 Peter 4.11 Let him who serves serve in the strength that God supplies. So we're leaning on grace.

We're leaning on grace. We're drinking in grace. We're staying under the waterfall of grace moment by moment.

Empowered not by our own legalistic resources of performance, but empowered by the Holy Spirit through faith in promises that He'll be there for us no matter what. In order that He might get the glory while we get the help. We get the help.

He gets the glory. The giver gets the glory. And such a deal I call gospel.

That's an awesome deal. If God will be your portion, He'll get the glory while you drink the fountain. Now those are the first two impulses.

I move quickly over those because the third one I don't talk about as often. And this book highlights it and wrestles with the implication of this third passion. And it's a passion for holiness.

So we need to talk about this one probably in a little more detail than we have followed. So now I am at 1.3 on your outline, A Passion for Practical Holiness. But I'll pause there and see if there are clarification questions about anything I just said with regard to the two passions behind the book and how they relate together.

Passion for glory. Passion for joy. Any clarification question there? Are you with me? Could you rethink those thoughts over again? Or do you need something said over? Okay.

Mull over it if it's puzzling or new to you. These are old things for Bethlehem veterans, but maybe brand new for some. One of the reasons I love going out to speak outside Bethlehem is because I can lay these things before people.

I went down to Chicago to the Finisher's Conference. And what happens when I speak on these things is I get a long line of people that line up after everyone and tears just flowing down people's eyes. And I get comments like, I've never heard anybody articulate what I thought I couldn't believe and believe.

Sam, the latter part is good later. The first part I'll talk to now. What I mean by latter part is, is happiness an essential ingredient in faith? I'm coming to that big time.

The first part is, in this hospital room where I was about three hours ago, what if, which they don't, the parents and the girlfriend of five years felt lousy about God? Well, they would need to repent. Now that is not what I would tell them. I'm telling you that now so that I don't have to tell it to you in the hospital room.

Okay? This is not the time to say by the hospital bed, repent. This is not the time. Nobody should ever feel lousy about God.

Period. It's a sin always to feel lousy about God. But now get this.

People make a mistake here. They see me say things like that and you know what they do? They go out of this church and they say, this is not a safe place to feel lousy about God. Bethlehem is not a safe place to be an imperfect person.

That's what they say. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is, it's a sin to feel lousy about God.

I'm not going to call a sin a non-sin to make anybody feel good. But everybody from time to time wrestles with doubt about God. Everybody sins.

The question is, at that point, what are we going to do with it? We're going to name it and we're going to fight it together in small groups over time. Good night. I've walked with people who wrestled against God for seven years before they will bow to His authority in the loss of a child who at age 17 still has the mind of an 18 month old.

I can handle that. I'm just not going to call it okay. If it were okay, I wouldn't wrestle with it.

So yeah, I think that's a helpful observation. In that room over in St. Paul right now, these parents are resting in future grace with incredible joy and tears and pain including the boy. And I told them, it probably won't be that way in the middle of the night tonight when you wake up.

You know, when you get a blow like last night the phone call from the doctor at 10.30. When a doctor calls you at 10.30 after a blood test, you tremble. God comes at those incredible moments with extraordinary grace. You feel like, I could bear the world.

It won't always be that way. They're in for years. My guess is, and they'll probably listen to these tapes, so I want to almost speak to them pastorally right now.

He will probably enter a kind of therapy where they will shoot his marrow dead so that a common cold will kill him. And he will be isolated. And we will all be praying as a church, restore the marrow.

Give him life. I've seen it happen. I saw it happen to Randall Van Meter.

Walking miracle today. But in that battle, there will be nights and days when the strength of this night is not the same. And they will wrestle.

So yes, we wrestle. Yes, we are perplexed. We don't understand why him, why now, why at age 21.

I don't know any of that. But oh, have we got promises. Let me just tell you what the Lord did.

It was so sweet. I'm risking consuming a lot of my precious 72 transparencies here, but this is right. I think this is good.

On the way over there this afternoon, I was asking the Lord, Lord, you see, I just worked on this. There are hundreds of Scriptures in these overheads. Any one of them would have been good to use over there.

Just promise after promise after promise and other things. And I said, Lord, I could just pick something, but as I'm driving down the freeway going over to St. Joe's, I said, Lord, just bring to my mind something that would be unusually fitting. And I don't know how your brain works at that point.

I don't know how God works. I don't know how the brain works. I just know that percolating to the top of my mind after that prayer was Psalm 34:19 which I know by heart.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, and the Lord delivers Him out of them all. So I said, okay. I'll share that one with you.

I parked in the parking ramp just to go in and check the context to see how much of it I might want to read rather than just quoting it. You know what the next verse says? He keeps all His bones. Not one of them is broken.

I've got shivers all over me. And so did they when I read it to them. Now, my own understanding of God's leading is that I cannot with the authority of Scripture tell them that means He's not going to die or they won't find anything in the bone marrow.

But it heightens the authority and power and grace of God to deal with bones! And that God would use it. It's like God saying, I'm right there on top of this bone marrow biopsy that He was coming out of at that moment. I'm right there.

I know bones. I do bones. God is good.

God is really good. Know your Bible and then pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit and God will do wonderful things in your own ministry to people. Okay, now we're at passion number three.

A passion for practical holiness. Why this passion? It's the only pathway to eternal pleasure in God. No holiness, no heaven.

That's why I'm concerned about this. Without practical holiness, nobody will get to heaven. I've got some texts on that.

1.3.3 But first, a definition. What do I mean by practical holiness? Obedience to God's Word in everyday life is what I mean. Or the fruit of the Holy Spirit is what I mean.

Or genuine love for other people. I equate almost love and holiness in the Christian life. Let me give you a verse or two for why.

Here's the key verse. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 says, May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, for all people, and for all people. So, Paul is hugely interested that we be a loving people.

Not towards each other only, but towards everybody. Just as we also do for you. Notice the connection here.

The logical connection. Abound in love so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness. Isn't that interesting? I want you to abound in love so that you will be established in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus.

So there must be a very intimate connection between love and holiness. That is, holiness consists very much in love. So when I talk about a passion for practical holiness here, my main goal is, how can I become a loving person? That's my goal.

Holiness has this big kind of reverent, awesome ring to it. Kind of purity and set apart for God. And it just might not sound real tender and loving and caring.

And this should help us soften up the word holiness a little bit and realize that in Paul's mind, holiness consists in large measure in loving one another and loving other people. Now, if that's the definition of holiness slash love, what are the texts that warrant my saying no holiness, no heaven? And then we'll talk about the problem created by these texts. These texts that I'm going to read you now create a huge problem for justification by faith alone apart from works of the law which I believe in with all my heart.

So, let's create a problem. Hebrews 12.14 Pursue peace with all men and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. If you don't pursue peace and holiness, then you won't see the Lord.

John 5.28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth. Those who did the good deeds to the resurrection of life and those who committed evil deeds to the resurrection of judgment. Boy, does that sound like a deed-based religion.

That's in the Bible. That's not the Mishnah or the Talmud. That's the Bible.

It doesn't say that the resurrection to life and the resurrection to judgment are based on the good deeds. It says they are preceded by good deeds and how they are connected is a crucial question we have not yet answered. You just have to have them.

They've got to be there. Galatians 6.8 For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Now notice the contrast. Corruption is over against eternal life. So corruption means everlasting corruption.

And life means eternal life. And the difference is how you sow. Sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit makes the difference whether you are eternally corrupted or eternally living.

Let us not lose heart in doing good. There's the definition of sowing. Doing good.

Same as good deeds right here. For in due time we shall reap what? Eternal life. If we do not grow weary.

There are so many grace people today who will not look at these verses. They're grace people. But believe me, I will put my grace theology against anybody's grace theology.

I have a massive doubt. But I will not sweep these texts under the rug as though they were legal and not gracious. I will find out how they are gracious and write a book about it, which I did.

400 pages worth called Living by Faith in Future Grace because I have to. If I'm going to give an account on the judgment day according to James 3.1, as a teacher of these 1,400 people who come to this church every Sunday and these little clusters on the weekend, if I'm going to stand before the living God and give an account for how I led and fed the sheep, I don't want God truckling out about 100 verses and saying, how come you didn't deal with these? How come you were lopsided in your teaching and got people all out

of whack? I don't want that to happen. Here's some more.

These are the verses I know the Lord is going to ask me about. James 2.17, Even so, faith, if it has no works, is dead. If your faith doesn't produce works, it isn't saving faith.

It's dead. 1 John 2.4 The one who says, I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar. You don't know God if you don't keep the commandments.

You just don't know Him. 1 John 2.4 2 Thessalonians 2.13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. Sanctification, that is becoming holy, is by faith in the truth.

By faith in the truth. So, we become holy by faith. Matthew 6.15 But if you do not forgive men, then your father will not forgive your trespasses.

If we are an unforgiving, bitter, grudge-holding person, we can't count on God's forgiveness of us. We've damned it up and cut it off. Romans 8.13 If you are living according to the flesh, you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. There it is again. Over and over.

Whether you will live eternally depends on whether you are doing battle with sin. Do not hear me saying anything about perfectionism here except that I don't believe in it and neither does the Bible. There's not a saint in this room now, nor ever will there be, who's perfect.

Until Jesus comes. Everybody sins every day. And if you don't believe that, just ask yourself whether this day or any other day you have loved God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind and all your strength in everything you've thought, felt, and done today.

Good grief. I don't know how perfectionist type people come to terms with those kind of texts at all. Now, here's the problem.

You all know the problem. I've just created it for you. And probably you wouldn't be here if you didn't have some biblical awareness.

But we are now... Let's see, where are we in the outline? Key text to show 1.3.3. Now we are at 1.3.4 at the bottom of the page. The problem raised by the necessity of holiness. If we are justified once for all by grace through faith, apart from works, at the point of true conversion, then that is if we're justified at the point of true conversion, boom! Then how can our final salvation, eternal life, glorification, be conditional as we've seen it is in some way upon a transformed life of holiness? Now let's establish this justification teaching for a few verses, lest I take it for granted when I shouldn't.

Romans 3.28 We maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Justification is an act of God at a point in time when you authentically put your faith in Jesus Christ. You are at that moment reckoned righteous, acquitted in the courtroom of heaven, all your debt paid on Jesus' bloody death, and you are accepted.

Romans 5.1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, having been done, justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Or another good one. Galatians 2.16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ Jesus, not by the works of the law.

Since by the works of the law no flesh will be... Boy, that is clear! Over and over again he says the positive side and the negative side, the positive side and the negative side, the positive side justification by faith, the negative side no justification by works of the law. So, go ahead Phil. Oh, you want me to change my tape at half time here? It's worth an hour and a half, so let me just see if this is a good stopping point here.

Let me give the answer to this in nugget form, and then we'll take a little stand up break while I change my batteries. The solution given by the Westminster Confession, which is no authority above the Bible, of course. We'll check it out to see if the Bible is represented here.

But I wanted you to see a historic solution before I state my turn on it, my spin on it. Here's what it says. Those whom God effectually calleth, He freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins and accounting or accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone.

Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness is the alone instrument, the only instrument of justification. In other words, not works, but a receiving and a resting upon Christ and His righteousness, yet, key sentence now, yet is it not alone, it is not alone in the person justified. That is, the faith that justifies is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces and is not dead, is not a dead faith, but worketh by love.

So, here's the answer of the Westminster Confession. The reason the Bible, in all the texts I just gave you, can say nobody will inherit eternal life apart from works of obedience, evidences of a transformed life, is because the faith which justifies is never a dead faith, but a working faith, and it works by love. So, here's my paraphrase of that.

In other words, we are justified by faith alone, but that faith never remains alone. Therefore, justifying faith is always and inevitably accompanied by good works. So, there's a very, very, very crucial distinction to make here when you talk about what our life is based on, or what our future life is based on, and that is that it is based on faith in Christ and His work and His word and His righteousness, and that the works evidence the reality of that faith and are not themselves part of the foundation of the salvation.

I'll say that again in just a minute with words taken from Thomas Watson. But here's a crucial question. Now, why does practical holiness, or love, inevitably accompany justifying faith? Why does it? Westminster Confession says it does.

Why does it? Here's my preliminary answer. Faith itself is the agent of the works. They do not merely accompany faith.

They come through or by faith. Faith is the agent that produces the works. And it does so necessarily.

Thus, the works are evidence of true faith and are not the means of our salvation the way faith is. They are the evidence that faith is real and thus are necessary for final salvation, though not the ground of it, as the death and righteousness of Christ are the ground of it, or the means of it, as faith is the means of it. I'll say that again now.

The death of Christ and the righteousness of Christ are the ground of our salvation and justification. The means by which we appropriate that for ourselves is faith alone without works. Works, given the nature of this faith, are the inevitable effect or outcome of that one and only means by which we appropriate the ground of our salvation, Jesus Christ.

So works are neither the ground nor the means of our justification. They are the evidence of the reality of the means that lays hold on the ground and therefore are necessary at the judgment day when... I'll show you what's going to happen at the judgment day. This is an analogy taken from 1 Kings 3.16-27. How is God at the judgment day going to deal with the works of the believer? There's going to be a lot of sin in the believer's life.

And there's going to be some good works and some evidences of love and a transformed life and a lot of affections, a lot of warfare against sin, and a lot of yielding to righteousness. We are no longer slaves of sin. Sin shall no longer have dominion over you, but you are now slaves of righteousness.

This is Romans 6. So the battle goes on according to Galatians 5. The Spirit desires one thing and the flesh desires another, and the Spirit and the flesh are at war with each other. That's Christian living. Those who don't have the Holy Spirit don't have that battle.

Now what is the Lord going to say to us when He asks for the folders of our lives? According to Revelation, everything is being written in a book. You've got the book of life and you've got the other books. We will give an account for every idle word Jesus says.

That's scary. I spoke some idle words today that I'd just as soon not be brought up. They might be just kind of a tone of voice, a belittling tone of voice, when your wife asks a question that you... You're just in the tone of voice and the way you answer it is a put down.

And if she calls you on it, well, it's true. That's not the issue. Don't change the subject.

The issue is was the tone of voice a put down? Which it was. And marriages need to work hard on tone. Not just truth.

So, here's the way I think it's going to happen. There's a story about these two harlots. They brought a baby to King Solomon, each claiming that the baby was hers.

They asked King Solomon to act as judge between them. Remember this story. In his extraordinary wisdom, this is all told to illustrate God's answer to his prayer for wisdom.

He said that a sword should be brought and that the baby should be divided with half given to the one woman and half to the other. The true mother cried out. It's a quote now from verse 26.

Oh, my Lord, give her the child and by no means kill it. And Solomon said, give the first woman the living child and by no means kill him. She is his mother.

Now, what was he fishing for? He was fishing for a relationship between a mother and a son. But what did he get that showed the relationship? He got an act of love. That's what he got.

The words, don't kill it, she can have it, is love. Those words of love did not create the relationship. You see the key here? That's the key.

Those words of love did not create the relationship between the mother and the child. Neither do any of your good deeds create any relationship with God. Nor can they.

Legalism is the mindset that says my deeds, if I just work hard enough, will make a relationship. I can get a standing with God. I can get Him to accept me.

I can get Him to like me. If I just do enough good things, that would be like the false mother here thinking she could create a relationship by saying enough right things. So, when God at the judgment day says let's open the books here.

I want to see the books. I want to look at the transcript. And I'm afraid a lot of our transcripts will read a lot like the Star Report.

Maybe in the first half of our lives. And maybe for some season afterwards. A lot of junk.

A lot of junk. Now, at that point, you know what the Lord is looking for? He's not looking for a balance. I'm going to collect all these good deeds.

All these bad deeds. I'm going to put them in the scales. Good.

This person is justified because the scale is going down on the good deeds side. That's Islam. And most religions.

Clunk. Enough good deeds. You squeak by the skin of your teeth or whatever.

The Lord is looking for evidences of a transformed heart that began to war against sin and triumph over it in measure. And when He sees that trajectory, that redirection of life, moving up and down and stopping and starting and failing and fighting, moving steadily Godward with all of its failures and all of its imperfections, confessing its sin when it falls and standing up and fighting back at last again, and so on. We're going to talk a lot about practical lust and bitterness and impatience and anxiety tomorrow.

He looks at that and He lays that out on the table in the courtroom and He says, This is evidence of faith. And faith was in my son. And my son paid for everything in this folder.

So, we'll gather up all these other sheets here. And they go in the round file. He puts a match to them.

And never brings them against you. But they're there and I don't know exactly the dynamics of those moments, but probably there will be some tears there. Maybe God will ordain some tears forever.

Occasionally. I'm not sure. But He'll only do that if the weeping will heighten the joy of grace.

He'll only let us remember something. And I know the Bible says He forgets our sins. I think that means that He will treat them as virtually holding nothing against us.

But a memory of a forgiven sin can sweeten forgiveness. I mean, I have done things in my relationship with Noel for which years later, God convicted me that I should apologize for. I did one while we were in a hotel room together a year or so ago.

I was lying there trying to go to sleep. And I thought, I've just got to bring this up. It was years old.

I said, I just want to apologize. I don't think I ever said I was sorry for that. And today, just a year later now, Noel's response to me is so sweet.

Should I deprive myself of the enjoyment of that sweetness by not remembering that moment? Should I? But I can't remember that moment without remembering what I apologized for. You see, if that doesn't work for you, fine. It's all burned up in the can.

And if you function another way, but if you function that way, it may be that in Heaven the Lord will do something like that for you. I don't know. It will be good.

Good as it can be. It will be there. Therefore, faith is not only the means of justification, it is the agent of sanctification.

In other words, living by faith in future grace is the power to be pure, to be holy, to be loving. And I've developed this whole book to try to show that the battle to fulfill the verses that say you must be an obedient person to get to Heaven is not a legalistic battle. It's got to be fought at another level in another way which I call living by faith in future grace.

And here's my little preliminary summary answer of how then does faith do this great work of sanctification. So now I'm at 1.3.7 in the outline. And my preliminary answer goes like this.

Faith severs the root of sin. Sin has power by promising a better tomorrow. Nobody sins out of duty.

Nobody gets up in the morning and says I don't want to sin today, but I guess I should, so I will. We only sin because sin whispers sweet promises of maybe just for an evening. You know good and well the hangover's coming or the jail is coming.

You read that story of those three kids who killed that Somali boy in the papers. I read every word of that. How easily... And one of them said, one of these three teenagers who slit his throat and stabbed him 27 times and bashed his head in with rocks.

They said, one of them said, I knew I'd be caught. It wasn't out of duty that he killed him. Sin whispers the craziest, cruelest lies to us.

And most of them are sweet. Most of them are sweet. And they are suicidal lies.

We'll see that later. Lusts that wage war against your soul. 1 Peter 2, verse 11.

War. So, sin has power by promising a better tomorrow or at least a better this evening and by superior satisfactions. I lost the sentence by stopping.

Sin has power by promising a better tomorrow and by... I think I dropped a sentence there. Forget that. But true faith is of such a nature that it severs the root of sin by embracing a better future and providing a deeper satisfaction.

The future grace of God is the deeper satisfaction and the better future. When you live by faith in future grace, the power of sin is broken by the power of a superior satisfaction and a better future. That's the book in a paragraph.

That's the course in a paragraph. That's why I call it a preliminary answer. And it needs to be unpacked.

But if you get that, if you understand the dynamics of that and you can live that, you understand everything I'm trying to get across here in this course. Sin has power by summoning you to trust its lies that if you go its way, you will have at least a better this evening. Future grace or the Word of God carrying the promises of future grace comes in and like a sword of the Spirit begins to wage war against those lies.

And if you will trust those promises and rest in all that God promises to be for you in Jesus and experience that as a superior satisfaction, the root of sin is severed and the power of sin is broken and you will follow the way of future grace. That's what we've got to unpack. Okay.

Summary. The three passions that are driving us are a passion for the supremacy of God, what kind of life will satisfy the deepest longings of our soul, so supremacy of God, longings of our soul, and the kind of life that will produce practical holiness. So, glory of God, joy of our souls, practical holiness, what kind of life, if you live it, will glorify God, satisfy your soul and make you holy.

And my answer is, living by faith in future grace. And now, in what time we have left tonight and then tomorrow, we're going to do this. We're going to try to find out what the biblical underpinnings are and then we're going to grapple with five, if we have time, five practical sins like anxiety and bitterness and sexual temptation and impatience and covetousness.

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