

# Living by Faith in Future Grace - Lesson 3

by John Piper

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*John Piper emphasizes the importance of living by faith in future grace, highlighting the relationship between past and future grace and the necessity of heartfelt trust in God.*

**Duration:** 1:33:12

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 30:19, Proverbs 3:5-6, Jeremiah 24:7, Habakkuk 3:17-18, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:32, Philippians 3:8

**Topics:** "Faith And Grace", "Trust In God"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor John Piper discusses the concept of living by faith and future grace. He emphasizes the importance of relying on God's grace in the present and trusting in His promises for the future. Piper references Romans 8:32, which highlights the past grace of God sacrificing His own Son for us and the assurance that He will freely give us all things. He also shares a personal poem and connects it to the biblical passage from Habakkuk, emphasizing the need to trust in God even when circumstances are difficult.

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## Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from *Desiring God* is available at [www.DesiringGod.org](http://www.DesiringGod.org) Okay, I think I'm ready. And if you are, I think we'll connect here in our Saturday morning continuation of this seminar on living by faith and future grace.

And I would like to begin by reading you two things. One is a passage from the end of the book of Habakkuk. And the other is the first part of a poem I wrote for my wife on our 20th anniversary.

And the link between these two is that this text was read at our wedding in 1968. And on that 20th anniversary I wrote this poem and read it to the whole church that December. But I want to read a little piece of that.

The text goes like this. This is the last three verses of the book of Habakkuk. Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail, and the fields yield no food.

The flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.

God the Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like hinds feet. He makes me tread upon the high places.

And it is a remarkable thing to me that in the Old Testament, which so many people equate with a religion that makes synonymous the blessings of God and the love of God, that you could have a text like this which says when all the blessings are taken away, like fig trees and vines and olives and fields and sheep and herds, it's all taken away and there's nothing, which means you're in an absolutely starvation situation, the Old Testament would say, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation. Because it says in Psalm 63.3, the steadfast love of the Lord is better than life.

So if you die with God, you have the better portion than if all of the trees and vines and herds are flourishing without God. And that's in the Old Testament. And it's a good way to build a marriage because all marriages will face these seasons, all of them, if they are obedient.

So this was the first paragraph of this poem. Although the fig tree blossom not, and all the vines of our small plot be barren, and the olive fail and the sheep grow weak and heifers frail, we will rejoice in God, my love, and take our pleasures from above. The Lord our God shall be our strength and give us life, whatever length on earth he please, and make our feet like mountain deer to rise and cleat the narrow path for man and wife that rises steep and leads to life.

So for those of you on the front end of marriage or singleness and contemplating marriage, know that you need to have your hearts fixed together in something deeper than a smooth and downhill passage. Because you need to rise and cleat the narrow path for man and wife that rises steep and leads to life. And when you have your hearts both fixed on something besides the marriage, and it's pleasures of the marriage bed, or it's pleasures of health, or it's pleasures of children, or it's pleasures of job and prosperity, or whatever, then when your hearts are fixed on something bigger and better than the marriage itself, the marriage has a chance to survive.

And if you don't, then you will make a god of your marriage and those gods will inevitably grow. Father, I pray now that as we move into this three hour session on future grace, that we will realize that the heart and the essence of future grace is not the flourishing crops, and it is not a large herd. It is yourself, offered to us in measure through fellowship now, and then with ever increasing intimacy and joy throughout all eternity as the greatest satisfaction imaginable for our lives.

So forbid, I pray, that there would be a misunderstanding now that future grace is some kind of prosperity thing in which the saints are guaranteed an easy life or an abundant material life. But rather, O Lord, fix the hearts of your people now on yourself and your steadfast love. Grant us the strength for this morning.

Grant us the wakefulness and the alertness and the intensity and the earnestness and the passion that we need to deal faithfully with these things, I pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. In our outline, we began section two last night, Is It Biblical? The Foundations of the Sanctifying Power of Living by Faith in Future Grace.

And the first one we dealt with there was faith as the great worker. And the second one was that the grace we trust in when we have faith is not just a quality in God and not just an act in the past, but a power of God exerted and promised to be exerted in the future that we will all need to survive in faith for eternity. And then the third point was that faith is therefore future-oriented.

Since all that grace is being poured out on us in the future, therefore faith which trusts in grace will be future-oriented and will bank on the promises of God as it holds out grace to us for tomorrow, this afternoon. So, for example, I've got to preach tomorrow morning on homosexuality. Well, did you see the front page of the Tribune this morning? That's what I'm preaching into.

The hate, the boy may be dead by now as far as I know. And so, if you're going to say things about the sinfulness of homosexual behavior into that context, it takes extraordinary wisdom and sensitivity. And so, my only hope, because I haven't even started writing this sermon yet, though I've thought about it for 20 years or so, my hope this afternoon is future grace.

That between 1 o'clock and midnight or whenever it's over, there's going to be grace for Sunday morning. And that's why I can relax now and focus on this and don't have to be chewing my fingernails about homosexuality during these three hours. That doesn't always work for me, but that's the way I try to live, is that burdens are stacked up in life.

Sometimes they get stacked on top of each other, and you must have grace to handle the stack. Often they come stacked behind each other, and you need to learn that sufficient unto the day is the stack thereof. And you just take them one at a time.

And as your days, so shall your strength be. And if that's true, then the same would be true for hours, wouldn't it? As your hours are, so shall your strength be. And you learn this more when you get older, because as I talk to people, as I go to visit older people and talk to them and say, How are you making it? How are you handling this loss of your vision or hearing or whatever? And the usual answer is, One day at a time.

One day at a time. And that's biblical. That's real biblical.

We'll see that later on when we talk about battling anxiety. But we want to keep laying foundations for the next hour or so here, and we'll see how long point number two takes us. Okay, 2.4. The function of bygone grace, namely, solid ground under faith in future grace.

My favorite text in the Bible probably is Romans 8.32. There are others running neck and neck from my favorite, but this one probably is at the top. He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? Now there's a logic in this verse. It's got a past component.

The first half is the past half, and the second half is the future half. He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. That happened at a point in history.

Past. Now, this is a rhetorical question. You see it's got a question mark at the end, and that's what it is in the text.

Whenever you have a rhetorical question that has no answer following it, what you do in your head, what the author expects you to do in your head is change the question into a statement. Now somebody paraphrase this for me by changing the second half into a statement which is being made by this rhetorical question. Who would volunteer to do that? Somebody try it.

He will also with Him freely give us all things. And wouldn't you think that it would accord with Paul's intention to insert before that statement a strengthening word? I think a rhetorical question implies something's obvious. You didn't go last night? Or will you not go tomorrow? And surely you will go.

So I would just add to Diane's paraphrase the word surely or something like that. He who did not spare his own son but delivered him up for us all, surely he will now give us all things freely with him. There's an argument here.

And the first half, 32a, is a foundation on which now stands 32b. This is the foundation. And this is the consequence.

And the consequence follows and stands upon and is supported by the foundation. And therein we see the function of bygone grace and the point of looking back in the Christian life. So please, understand this.

This is unbelievably important lest I be seen as minimizing the cross, the death of Jesus and the resurrection of Jesus as a phenomenal and all-important historic demonstration of the grace of God for us. If that had not happened, there could be no future grace. You see how important this is.

The cross purchased all future grace. Had Jesus not died for my sin, I could expect one thing in the future from God. What? Wrath.

That's all I could expect. Justice would only be fulfilled in damning me. That's the only thing I could expect had Christ not died for me.

So you see how unbelievably the backward look is. But, here's the way to think about it. I'll act it out for you here.

I'm walking into the past now. And I've arrived here at Calvary. And I embrace Christ.

I love Him. I thank Him. I recognize in Him and this death the payment for all my sins and the impartation to me or imputation to me of His righteousness.

And I take my stand there. But I don't look down and I don't look back. I look forward.

I stand here. That's my foundation. And I look forward and I walk into the future on this foundation.

I have the confidence that there is a future for me because I've looked back at the payment that bought the future. That's the relationship between bygone grace and future grace. And what I'm pleading for is that in our evangelism and in our Christian living, we don't leave people looking back and down as though the only thing they had to believe to be saved is that Christ died for them and rose for them.

And leave them hanging with regard to whether there's any grace for this afternoon's trials. And whether saving faith embraces faith in future grace as well as past grace. I don't think you can be a Christian without trusting God for future grace.

Like I said last night. It's like trusting your wife on Monday. And not the other six days of the week.

It's like believing that Christ is half a Savior. He can make provisions for sin, but He can't make provisions for eternity. Or He can't make provisions for this afternoon, or make provisions for relationships, or make provisions for finances, or make provisions for health.

He just can't handle all those things. Therefore, a lot of Christians live their lives the way the world lives their lives, only they come to the end of the day and say, thank you that my sins are forgiven. And that's why there's no power.

That's why there's no holiness. That's why there's no radical risk-taking in Christian living. Because we're functioning with the same values and the same worries, the same anxieties, the same cravings, the same covetousness, the same bitternesses, because we don't have any future grace out there on which to cast

ourselves to deliver us from those things.

We just keep saying, my sins are forgiven, my sins are forgiven, my sins are forgiven. All this messing up that I do every day, it's forgiven, it's forgiven, it's forgiven, as though that's Christianity. That's half Christianity, and therefore, no Christianity.

Romans 5.9 gets at it again. Much more than having now been justified, notice the past backward look, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath of God through Him. So that's the long look into the future, but the structure of the argument is exactly the same as 8.32. He did not spare His own Son, so surely He will give us all things with Him.

He justified us in the past, so surely He will save us from wrath. Verse 10, same thing. If while we were enemies, we were reconciled past to God through the death of His Son, much more having been past, shall we be saved by His life? The future hope of grace is built on the past act of grace.

Or here's one. Hebrews 4.14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. Now notice past tense.

We have, that's present, who has passed. He has passed through the heavens. So Jesus died, He rose, He entered into heaven in the holy place where He pleads our case now, Jesus the Son of God.

Let us go on holding fast our confession, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all points as we are yet without sin. Let us therefore now draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Now this is how you should live this afternoon.

See? This is for future. If you quibble with this and say, Oh, I think it's for the present. Then you've got to realize what I believe about the present.

Namely that it doesn't exist. I don't think the present exists. That's an overstatement probably, although it's a mystery to me where the present is.

Can you point to it? As soon as you point, it's gone. What is time at the point between the future and the past? I don't know. It's a mystery to me.

Is there a line? Is it without dimension? In geometry a line has no dimensions except sideways, right? If you cross a line, you're not crossing any space. So is there space between the past and the future? Is there a place where you have a self-consciousness there? It seems to me that life is like a reservoir out in front of you and a river behind you leading to an ocean, and you're the waterfall or the dam. And the present is like a dam and the reservoir of the future is cascading over the dam continually turning into a past river.

And you live there and you can look in two ways. You can look back on the river with gratitude, which you should, or you can look forward into the reservoir, which in God's mind is infinite, and you can exult. And you can see just a little millimeter away, like twenty-nine minutes after nine.

You can look at that part of the reservoir and you can say, this is the present. We're living in the present this morning and God is here in the present. Okay, fine.

If you want to talk that way, that's fine. And just understand that you will need God in five seconds to keep you breathing, according to Acts 17.25, to keep the building from not being blown up or caving in, or keep the sun from not darkening. And there, now it's past.

That much grace is gone and you should be grateful for those five seconds of life. So, just understand that if you want to call this the present activity of Christ, that's fine. But as you start to pray right now for grace, for well-timed help, then know that you're asking for a future thing.

And it's promised here on the basis of the past fact that He has passed through the heavens and He's there at God's right hand. He's interceding for you and He has great grace from this throne to help you in time of need. If there weren't help for a time of need, if there weren't future grace to be trusted like that, then this text would be in vain and I wouldn't know how to live my life at all.

Now, that's the end of number four. And the point was, bygone grace is not insignificant, it is infinitely significant because all of future grace rests on the bygone grace of Calvary. Comment or question on that? 2.5 This was Sam's question last night, at least if I understood him correctly, it was part of his question.

Faith is a being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus, not just an assent to truths, past or future, but a heartfelt valuing and treasuring of all that God promises to be for us in Jesus. Now, that is a huge claim because if that's true, then there may be many people who think they are believers who are not believers and therefore not saved. Because I think in many, many brands of Christianity, we do a kind of evangelism and then we do a kind of preaching and teaching that tends to foster nominalism.

That is, we are so eager for numbers, you know, we want to get statistics that we have figured out ways to do evangelism that can get numbers quick. We lead people in prayers and we get them to sign cards and we get them to do things that their willpower can do and if they are scared enough or if enough friends are doing it on the beach or if the music is good enough and the fellowship looks neat, we can get them to do these things. And then we've got our numbers and then we tell them they're saved and they may not be because nothing's changed.

Their hearts do not delight in God. They just don't want to be damned. Well, nobody wants to be damned.

The devil doesn't want to be damned. Not to want to be damned is quite carnal. It takes no spiritual life whatsoever not to want to be damned.

That's not a saving affection. A saving affection is delight in God. It's not whether you don't want to go to hell, but do you want to go to heaven if the only person there were God? And no golf.

And no beach. No basketball. Go ahead.

The question is what about the parable of the shrewd servant who negotiated with the debtors of his master in order to get a place to live when he was put out of his stewardship? Well, the conclusion at the end of that parable is be like that person and use unrighteous mammon to gain for yourself eternal habitations. And then you have to just ask what is that? And I think eternal habitations means being with God forever. Behold, I go to prepare a place for you and when I come, I will take you to myself.

So, the Bible is full of images of heaven which are material images. Streets and trees and rivers and the lion will lie down with the lamb and so on. And I do believe in the resurrection of the body and a new

heavens and a new earth where there will be something like stuff.

But my point is you don't have to be born again to want stuff. You don't have to be born again to want to escape hell or to want to have an eternally happy life of playing like you enjoy playing here. But you do have to be born again to love God.

The natural man does not love the things of the Spirit, does not receive the things of the Spirit. And we must be born again to be saved. What I'm illustrating here is that as I now define faith like this, I am simply upping the stakes of our evangelism and our nurturing so that we don't give people false assurance that they are saved when they have no new affections.

That is, no spiritual affections. Decisions alone without changed heart affections don't save. Heart changes save.

You must have taken out the heart of stone and put in the heart of flesh. You must delight yourself in the Lord. You must love God with your heart and soul and mind and strength.

1 Corinthians 16.22 Paul closes the letter. Imagine closing a letter this way. He who does not love the Lord, let him be damned.

Anathema means damned. Let him be anathema. And he chose the word love, not believe.

He who does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. God works all things together for the good of those who what? Love God, not trust God. See, I'm going to argue now that trust includes as part of its essence, love.

That's what I'm going to argue for. But I'm afraid in much evangelicalism, our pragmatism, our American pragmatism, has wrenched apart the controllable from the uncontrollable. Because we want to be in control.

We've got to get statistics here. We've got to get results. Well, you can't get results quite as easily if you tell people they've got to be transformed miraculously from the inside and give evidence of a heart transformation.

How are you going to tell if that's happened on the beach? It takes a little time. It doesn't have to. There might be a sudden, dramatic, wonderful conversion like at Pentecost.

Cut to the heart. What must we do, brethren? They're slain in their conviction. And he says, believe on the Lord.

And then they believe and they continue in the apostles' teaching and the breaking of bread and prayer. They love prayer now. They love prayer.

They love to commune with God. Okay, now we need to defend this biblically. I've said it, but now I need to show it.

So let's look at a few passages of Scripture to see whether this is so. I do believe, lest I minimize this, that we call for acts of the will to be performed in response to our evangelism. Choose ye this day whom you will serve, Elijah says.

And many, many texts like that in the Bible. Line up with God. But what we mean by that is what Jeremiah meant and others when he said, get yourselves a new heart.

Circumcise your heart. And then he'll turn around and say in the New Covenant promise, God circumcises the heart. God takes out the heart of stone and puts it in the heart of flesh, but He calls on us, get yourself a new heart, etc.

Philippians 3.8 More than that, I count all things as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish. Now notice the logic here. I count all things as rubbish.

Look at the logical connector here. In order that I may gain Christ. So the pathway or the means of gaining Christ is to have a heart that as it regards Christ and everything but Christ, looks at the everything but Christ and counts it, feels it, regards it as rubbish.

In order that, having regarded it as rubbish, Christ might be owned as the all-satisfying treasure. That's my understanding of those verses, those words. Now the question is, is that faith or is that something after faith? Or is that different from faith? Is the counting of all things as rubbish that you may have Christ faith? Now let's look at verse 9. In order that I might gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God.

Now this calls for thought. Think with me here about this. Between this counting of everything as rubbish in order to gain Christ and faith, we want to know, are these two the same? Or are they related in some other way? Or is one included in the other? And the way I'm going about it is to see which or what each of them gains.

Does the counting of everything as rubbish gain Christ? And does faith gain Christ? And if both gain Christ, then probably they're part of each other. And they do both gain Christ. Look.

I count everything as rubbish. I count them as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ and may be found in Him not having a righteousness of my own. Alright.

So, the counting of everything as rubbish to gain Christ also gains him this righteousness. That I might gain Christ and be found in Him not having a righteousness of my own based on law. So, if he counts everything as rubbish, he gains Christ and has a righteousness not of his own and not that based on law.

So he's now justified. But, it's not based on law, but that which is through faith. So it's faith that you gain this righteousness and thus gain Christ.

You can't have Christ without His righteousness. So when I saw that, that flow of thought there, I could not bring myself to disconnect these two things. Faith and counting all things as rubbish in order to gain Christ.

Now that's my first argument for why faith should be understood to include a being satisfied in Christ. Now stop there and see if anybody wants to check me on that. Am I drawing out from that text a legitimate inference there? Can you imagine on the basis of this text Paul saying, I can have faith in Christ and regard all this rubbish as really, really not rubbish and just as valuable as Christ.

Can you imagine him saying that? I can't. Luke 14.33 He who would come after me must renounce everything that he has. Luke 14.33 In other words, now I don't want to overstate the case here because otherwise I'll start sounding like a perfectionist.

The only people who can be saved are perfect people. We're talking about a principle or a seed sown in the heart by the Holy Spirit at new birth. The Spirit comes in and He plants Himself there and He begins to release His power in the transforming work of sanctification.

And so what you're looking for early on in the Christian life are the seeds and trajectories of these things. You're not looking for full-blown the booze goes and the homosexuality goes and the cigarettes go and the pornography goes and the swearing goes and everything just like that. Or you can't think of yourself as a Christian.

We're talking about the redirection of a river of life. I like the little phrase because it's memorable. The evidence is not perfection, but direction.

Not perfection, but direction. So the river is flowing toward the world and all of your satisfaction is coming from things, innocent things, sinful things, whichever. And it comes from things and suddenly God awakens you to spiritual reality and the importance of your own soul and the reality of God.

Jesus is made to be beautiful to you and compelling and self-authenticating in His saving power. And you want forgiveness and you want a new treasure in your life. You want eternal existence with Him.

And you, by an act of will granted by the Spirit, turn to Him. And a new direction is forged. And as the river begins to flow in this direction, there's a lot of mud in this river.

There's a lot of mud left over from the way the river was flowing. And it's got to flow in this channel of fellowship with Jesus for some time usually before it begins to clear up. And the way the devil works and the way our old nature tends to work is that we tend to contaminate it periodically as we go to glory.

The devil's heaving his clumps of mud in there and you often try to go out of bounds for a little while and get it all muddied. But the direction is fundamentally different. There's a new reality in this life calling it again and again to fight this mud, to clear itself up and to keep on going.

But now, let's go back to your question. There are a few ambiguities in that statement. Let me say it again for the tape and for the rest of you who may not have heard.

We are saved by faith plus nothing was the statement. Is that true? And does it mean the same as we are saved by faith minus everything else? The first ambiguity is the word saved. I would be happier if you asked me about justified.

Because you see, the word saved in the Bible is so massive it includes everything that happens to us from the first work of God for us in election to the eternal keeping of God in heaven. And so it includes election and predestination and the atonement and the shed blood of Christ and the resurrection and the conviction for sin and the origin of faith and the justification and then sanctification and salvation and then keeping and perseverance. All that is called salvation in the Bible.

Some of salvation is contingent upon obedience. There is future salvation out there. Justification is not contingent on works at all.

It happens in the twinkling of an eye at that first authentic awakening of faith. Genuine saving faith. So, if you were to ask me about are we justified by faith plus nothing, I would say absolutely.

If you were to ask me are we glorified by faith plus nothing, I would say now we got to be careful here because I gave you about ten texts last night that say pursue holiness without which you will not see the Lord. So, there must be holiness if we are going to be glorified. So, the word saved creates an ambiguity and forces me to make distinctions.

So, if you are asking justification, I say faith alone. What I am doing here is arguing that faith alone includes this. It is not plus this.

It is this. Well, that's what faith is. You see, the imputed righteousness of the law or the imputed righteousness of Christ is through faith.

Now, faith is an act of the human heart. It is a subjective reality in me. I believe it's wrought by the Holy Spirit.

It's a gift of God according to Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. So, you can't play off this subjective experience right here against the objective imputation of righteousness. That is, the counting of them as rubbish cannot be played off against the objective imputation of righteousness because what this counting of everything as rubbish corresponds to is this faith. Both of these are subjective inner realities.

The objective thing that happens to us is a reckoning of righteousness to us through this. So, I'm arguing, well, if counting of everything as rubbish is that through which I gain Christ and have a righteousness not of my own, and if faith is that through which I have a righteousness not of my own, then this must be a part of faith. Counting everything as rubbish must be a part of faith.

So, here's my point. I understand saving faith with all of its imperfections at the beginning to be at least that response to God which has in it the seed of a renunciation of everything besides Christ as the satisfaction of the soul. So, if you ask a new believer, do you believe that God or Christ is the satisfaction of your soul so that you can turn away from everything and find satisfaction in Him? And are you now engaging in that turn? If they say yes, then I credit them as having saving faith.

Now, if in a week or two or a year I find that they have deceived me and perhaps themselves and really have idols everywhere and Christ is one idol on the shelf and there are many other idols on the shelf, then I simply say that they didn't do 2 Peter 1.10. Confirm your calling and election. I have led numerous people to Christ. I lead them right up to and they'll pray a prayer.

In my office, I give a big hug and welcome them as a brother. I don't usually hug the women in my office, but do whatever you're supposed to do with women when they believe and I say, this is an awesome thing that has happened and now press on and confirm the reality of what's happened here. That's why I talk.

Confirm the reality of what's happened here. I don't say, oh, maybe you're not saved. I don't try to discourage them.

I say, this is awesome. This is wonderful. This is beautiful.

I've seen God at work in your life. You got into my office because God was at work. This conversation took the turns it took because God was at work.

You prayed that prayer because God was at work. Now let us confirm in these future days of devotion and prayer and fellowship and worship and obedience that this work of God was a saving work and I'm with you in that battle. I think that's the way we should talk because then you're not stuck in a year or two years with having that person or their relatives come back and say, I lost my salvation or they lost their salvation.

You say, no, no, no. Nobody loses their salvation. It just wasn't real.

John 6.35 Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me shall not hunger and he who believes in me shall never thirst. Now I think it would be fair in John's theology as he's recording these words of Jesus and in Jesus' own thinking to say coming to Jesus in order to have your heart hunger satisfied is what it means to believe.

These are parallel here. This and this are parallel. He who comes to me shall not hunger.

He who believes in me shall never thirst. So you've got a picture of thirst and hunger and clearly he means spiritually there because he's dealing with this woman at the well and he's trying to get her from the natural to the spiritual. She can't understand it any more than Nicodemus could.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus runs into these people and says, you must be born again. And Nicodemus says, oh, climb back into my mother's womb. And he doesn't get it spiritually.

And he says, I've got water to drink that you don't know anything about. And she says, oh, Jacob gave us this well. Are you greater than Jacob? You can produce water out of the ground without a well.

She doesn't get it either. These are paradigms of the people we meet in the world. You try to share Christ with a person in spiritual reality.

There are no categories. I mean, without the Holy Spirit opening the eyes of the blind, the analogies are not available. So he's talking here spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst.

And the way you get them satisfied is by believing. So faith, there's no difference in the Greek between the word faith and belief. Same word.

Faith is a coming to Jesus to be satisfied. That's my definition of being satisfied with all that God is for us in Jesus. There are many others.

I don't think I'll linger long over these, but I'll just show them to you. John 7, 37-38. Same thing in John 3, 19-20 where it has to do with loving and hating the light.

And so the issues of coming to the light have to do with do you love the light? John 5, 40. You are unwilling to come to Me that you may have life. Just to illustrate that coming and believing are overlapping realities in John.

So let me just give you the conclusion on this point. Therefore, faith includes love for God in the sense of delight in Him and valuing Him and treasuring Him above all else. And so faith is a being satisfied in all that God is for us and promises to be for us in Jesus.

Therefore, faith severs the root of sin which is the promise sin makes for a better future and a better satisfaction. Now there again is the summary of living by faith in future grace and why it produces holiness. Do you see where I'm getting? Do you get the drift of this argument? I am trying to explain those

texts which say that a holiness is required for heaven, love is required for heaven, and yet we are justified by faith alone.

Our eternal life is sealed at the moment we're converted when we are justified by faith alone. And yet getting to heaven is contingent upon a certain lifestyle of holiness or love. How can those two things be? And my fundamental argument is the faith which justifies at the beginning is of such a nature that it necessarily makes you loving and holy.

If you get that little sequence there, that's the book. That's everything. That can explain those texts and how they do not compromise justification by faith alone.

How holiness can be required for heaven and yet heaven be guaranteed on the basis of faith alone at the beginning of your Christian life. Because that faith is this kind of faith which necessarily severs the root of sin. If a person is over the long haul under the dominion of sin, Romans 6 would say, they are not gods.

What does it say there at the beginning of Romans 6? It says, Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? The person asked at the beginning of Romans 6. You know what Paul's response to that is? His response is, Dead men don't sin. That's his response. How can you who have died to sin still live in it? He just asked the rhetorical question.

How can you who have died to sin still live in it? So, saving faith must include the executing power, that is the slaying power of sin. It must. Now the question is, we're at 2.6 in our outline.

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in this? Because at this point, a person might find fault with the drift of my argument by saying, You know, it sounds like you're turning sanctification into just a psychological phenomenon. And God is sort of vanishing off the screen here. If you think a certain way, or have a certain set of emotional satisfactions, then who needs God, because the processes themselves do it.

That's a danger, a misunderstanding. And so we must ask this question for Paul and me. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in enabling obedience? Because I've just argued that the nature of saving faith necessarily produces obedience.

So do you need the Holy Spirit? Here's how it fits together. Look at a few verses. Galatians 5.22 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, etc.

So if you're talking about love and holiness here, love, that essential component of holiness, Paul says it comes from the Spirit. It's the fruit of the Spirit. It's not coming essentially from John Piper or any of you.

It's coming by the work of the Holy Spirit. But look at Galatians 5.6 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. Now, which is it? Does faith work through love? Does faith work through love? Or does the Spirit produce love? Does faith work it? Or does the Spirit work it? Here's the connection.

Galatians 3.5 Does He then who provides you with the Spirit, and this provides here or supplies is present tense, does He then who goes on supplying you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by works of the law or hearing with faith? Now, there's the connection. You see, 5.22 said the Spirit produces love. 5.6 says faith works through love, which I think means faith is the agent that produces love.

Galatians 3.5 brings them together like this. God, who produces love by the Spirit, works that miracle among you, does it not by works of the law, but by hearing with faith. So, it would be if love is here as the goal, then you would have three stages.

The Spirit, faith, love. And if you ask, how does the Spirit get to love? How does the Spirit produce love? The Spirit does not circumvent faith. The Spirit does these things.

He is supplied. So, here's this pipe. And the Spirit is here flowing into this pipe.

And here is love being produced at the other end of the pipe. The Spirit does not flow anywhere but here. Hearing with faith.

So, this is this pipe right there. Hearing with faith is the pipe through which the Spirit flows to produce love. Now, key question.

Why does He say hearing with faith instead of just faith? Why doesn't He say, does He who provides the Spirit and works miracles among you like love and others, maybe more astonishing to some people like healings, I believe that too, does He do that, does the Spirit do that by works of the law or by faith? Why didn't He just say that? Why did He say hearing with faith? Now, I think there's something really profound here. And the more I thought about it, the more amazed I became. I think Paul wants to make sure that faith, which is the agent of the Spirit in producing love, always keys off of the Word of God.

The Word. The Word. That's what's heard.

The Word of Jesus. Romans 10, 14. Faith comes by hearing.

And hearing by the Word of Christ. Faith comes by hearing. And hearing by the Word of Christ.

Romans 10, 14. But why? Why is the Holy Spirit or God the Father prompting this writing so vigilant to make sure that we realize that the faith which appropriates the power of the Spirit and issues in love always orients on and consciously leans on the Word of Christ? And the answer, I believe, is the Holy Spirit is given, according to John, to glorify the Son. The Holy Spirit will come and He will glorify me, Jesus says.

Here's a risky way to say it. The Holy Spirit is the humble member of the Trinity. That's probably not a good way to say it.

But let me try to see if that sticks in your mind. Meaning, He is self-effacing. The Holy Spirit is the self-effacing member of the Trinity.

He puts Jesus forward. He quietly moves into the heart. He blows where He wills, it says in John 3.8. You don't know where He's coming from.

You don't know where He goes. He's like the wind. He comes in.

He creates. And He moves. And what you sense when the Holy Spirit is at work is Christ is great! That's the effect of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Christ is great. The cross is awesome. God the Father is a wonderful Father.

He's the Spirit of adoption. But He doesn't say, think about me. Think about me.

Think about me. Look at me. Look at me.

The Holy Spirit doesn't think that way. He's always saying, think about Jesus. Think about the Father.

I'm here. I'm doing it all. I'm performing the work.

But get your attention on Jesus. So I think the reason it says that the Holy Spirit works, not by the law, but by the hearing of faith, is that the Holy Spirit wants faith to rest on the Word of Christ. Consciously.

So that your conscious experience will be mainly, this promise is trustworthy, not, I feel the Holy Spirit as powerful in my life. That's a big observation. Now, you probably can discern by experience that when the Bible is coming alive to you, and the promises are tasting sweet to you, and the assurance is growing in you over the Word of God, the Spirit is working in you.

You can know this. But what the Spirit wants is that you not be sitting there at your prayer bench analyzing your heart. Are you there? Are you there? Feel.

Feel. Please feel. He wants you to open your Bible and read the Word of Christ.

And He then takes the reading, the hearing, this is the hearing, He takes this hearing and He causes the promises of future grace to feel so wonderful that they satisfy the soul and sever the root of sin. And that's the way the Holy Spirit sanctifies. The Holy Spirit is an indirectly, quiet, humble, self-effacing, mighty power in our lives that orients us again and again on the Word of God.

The revealed, written Word of God. So I had a paragraph about that, but I think I've just said it all, so I won't put that up here anymore. Let me illustrate this.

This text hit me a year or so ago in this regard. Look at this. This is 1 Peter 1, 3-6.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Now look at all these promises he piles up here that are based on our new birth through God's merciful work. We're going to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away.

It's reserved in heaven for you. You are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this, you greatly rejoice.

Now, I was walking across the bridge. I can remember it. I was walking across the bridge just reciting that text to myself from memory.

And as I got to this point, in this you rejoice, it just hit me. God means for me to get my joy from promises and truths revealed in the Bible. Not from some kind of non-word mystical experience with the Holy Spirit in the woods.

There are a lot of people with a new age infiltration who are today trying to separate word and spirit and go off and have some ecstatic experience with the spirit that's not oriented on the word. So, feel me, bless me, touch me. And if you really get radical, it has to do with falling down.

And believe me, I think the spirit can make you fall down. I'm not on a crusade against those who fall down. A lot of our people here have fallen down.

And I believe it's been God who knocked them down. I'm not against speaking in tongues. But if you begin to so want an immediate non-word mediated experience of the spirit, you will begin to create things by which it has to manifest itself other than exploding promises and precious truth.

And then you can get into huge trouble. So, without putting any of that down in itself, I want to say that what Galatians 3.5 meant when it says that the Holy Spirit is mediated and supplied to us and works miracles among us through the hearing of faith, He meant, in this you rejoice. Where does joy come from? And I can hear somebody say, it's the fruit of the Spirit.

The Spirit produces joy. And I say, absolutely He does. How does He? And there you get this, in this, in this, in this.

There it is. In what? In these truths that you've got to know. And so the head, apprehending and pondering, just, you see, here's what meditation does.

You've got to learn how to meditate if you want to be a happy Christian. Meditation gets here and that hits you, and then you back up and say, okay, I'm not going to read four chapters this morning. I've got enough right here to work with for half an hour.

And then you just back up and you just go a phrase at a time. And you say, where should we start? Let's start here. I have been born again, and it wasn't me who got me born again.

It was His great mercy. And then you'll ponder this word great for a little bit. Why did He say great? His mercy is not small, it's great.

How great? Well, as great as God is great. How great is God? Well, think of a galaxy or think of an ocean. Think of seven mile deep Pacific Ocean.

And this is meditation. You take a word and you savor it. You ask, what is great? And then what is mercy? Well, mercy is not law.

Mercy is when you've done bad and He cares for you even when you've done bad. And so He'll help me even though I blew it yesterday. And you meditate on the sweetness of mercy.

And then you come to this living hope here and you say, okay, hope is everything. I want to have hope. And what is a living hope? And you ponder that word living for a while.

And you get on down here to obtain an inheritance. And you ponder that word and you think about physical inheritances and whether you have any parents and whether you left you anything. And maybe they didn't.

And then you say, well, I've got a father who will. Or maybe your father did leave you something big. And you say, but this is going to be so much bigger.

And you meditate on inheritance. And you've got a half an hour. And this is the work of the Spirit.

Nobody meditates for a half an hour savoring the preciousness of God's work who doesn't have the Holy Spirit. So yes, joy, great joy comes from the Spirit. Galatians 5.22 I do not doubt it.

But the Spirit does it by the hearing of faith. And the hearing is this. In this, all these truths that you hear in the Bible, you greatly rejoice.

Skip John, other texts to show those kinds of things. John 7.37-39 So any comment or question on the role of the Holy Spirit in producing love when I made a strong case that it is the nature of saving faith to produce love. I would have no problem at all saying that the hearing there necessarily includes spiritual illumination and awakening to what the Word is really imparting, if that's what's meant by revelation.

Is that what was meant? Okay, then no problem. I agree with it. If what is meant is a non-written Word oriented waiting upon some special truth to be imparted another way, I would say that's just fraught with dangers.

And I don't think that's what Paul meant there. I think God can, like I gave you the illustration of going to the hospital yesterday and asking the Lord to lead me to a verse. Now there's some people who would say God revealed that to you, that you should read Psalm 34.19. And so it's revelation.

Let's say, okay, I believe God did that and maybe we should call that revelation, but if we do, we better qualify very heavily what we mean lest we begin to treat John Piper as an infallible recipient of divine revelation who can now write it down and it becomes tacked on the end of our Bible so that there are now 67 books. The Gospel according to John Piper can be tacked on because I'm a recipient of revelation. That's the danger.

Well, I don't think most people who talk that way mean that and so we'll give them the benefit of the doubt, but you weren't even bringing up that problem, so I won't worry with it. Go ahead. Yeah, it all hangs on how you construe the through or the by.

Either of those is legitimate translations, though they have different nuances of meaning, I guess, in English. We're talking about Galatians 5, 6 here and whether faith working itself out, that's a literal translation, working itself out through love or by love, or I even said it works love. The reason I think works love is a legitimate paraphrase is because the way I understand the through is not that faith is producing something else on the other side of love after it walks through the tunnel.

Picture that in your head. You've got faith on this side of the tunnel. The tunnel is love.

And on the other side, faith is doing something. So it passes through love and then works through love to do something else. Paul says in 1 Timothy 1, 5, the goal of our instruction is love from a sincere faith.

So the goal is love. So when I think he's working through love, I mean the work that he's doing is love. Love is coming out through the manifestations, I mean faith is coming out through the manifestations of love.

So here I have the invisible faith inside and nobody can see it and yet I'm supposed to glorify God. How will it get out so that people can see faith? It comes out through acts of love. Let your light so shine that men may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father.

The light within is the being satisfied with God, the joy in God that nobody can see until it expresses itself through love. That's the way I think he means for through to be taken there. But there are other texts that would confirm that if that seems tenuous to you and that maybe the text doesn't mean that.

But I think like 1 Timothy 1.5 and others. There was a hand over here. What is my working definition of love? Love is the overflow of joy in God that meets the needs of others.

That's a quote from Desiring God. Love is the overflow of joy or satisfaction in God that meets the needs of others. Love is inclined to do the maximum good to the maximum number.

I say it like that because never till I became a pastor did I realize how complicated this thing is. Doing good to a body of believers that are a thousand strong when what is perceived as helpful for one group is perceived as hurtful by another group is a complicated affair. And especially when it does hurt another.

I'm going to hurt some homosexuals on Sunday morning. Short term. If they'll give me time and listen with an open mind, they'll, I hope, get beyond the hurt.

But to label something an abomination like the Old Testament does, if a man lies with a man, it's an abomination, and you have done that many times, or you want to do it real bad, or you think it's right to do it, or you think God wired you to do it, will be felt as an attack. Is that loving? To make people feel attacked? We live in a mushy age where love is often defined in terms of the subjective response that people get. So you're always held hostage by people's emotions.

And if they say, I am hurt by what you're saying, by definition, you're not a loving person. I have been cornered so many times, especially during church discipline things and other things, where you do what you believe is right, and loving to do for the greater good and the greater body, and some will say, you don't love me. Because they feel hurt by what you did.

And if the definition of love is not letting people feel hurt, you're always held hostage by the subjective feelings of other people, and you can never act on the basis of truth and principle. You're always spinning the truth. You're always jockeying.

You're always listening to the polls. I had a thought the other day about this polls thing in relation to preaching. A preacher who decides on whether his message is fitting by taking surveys has put himself in an impossible situation.

Because he may take a survey or do a poll in his church and find that this is what they want to hear. But once he starts preaching on it, he's faced with the question that every sentence, but is this the sentence that will be pleasing? Is this the sentence that they want to hear? He's put himself in an absolutely unworkable position because you can't do a poll for every sentence. You can't do a poll for every paragraph.

You can't do a poll for every illustration. You can't do a poll for every tone of voice. There's some of you probably in this room that wish I wouldn't lift my voice because that reminds you of some screaming preacher you had when you were a kid.

And others of you wish that I would do it more. And so if I take polls about what tone of voice should I use when I preach, I put myself in an absolutely impossible situation. So do you.

You can't run your life on the basis of polls. Which is why Washington is such a weak place. It's so sad that there's so few people of conviction there.

The role of gratitude in... We'll finish two and then we'll take a break. We're at 2.7 now. What's the role of gratitude? Now here I began by saying I'm troubled by how many Christian leaders today say that the driving force for obedience is gratitude rather than faith and future grace.

So I've just listed here, nowhere in the Bible is gratitude connected explicitly with obedience as a motivation. Isn't that amazing? If you know an exception to that, tell me and I'll stop making that claim. But for some years now I've done this in big groups of very educated Christian people and nobody yet has successfully challenged me on this.

So I'm open still to being corrected. We do not find the phrase out of gratitude or in gratitude for acts toward God. Christian obedience is called the work of faith, never the work of gratitude.

We find expressions like live by faith and walk by faith, but never live by gratitude or walk by gratitude. We find the expression faith working through love, but never gratitude working through love. We find the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and from sincere faith, but not from sincere gratitude.

We read that sanctification is by faith in the truth, not by gratitude for the truth. We read that faith without works is dead, not that gratitude without works is dead. And when Jesus deals with the disciples' hesitancy to seek the kingdom first because they were worried about food and clothing, He did not say, O men of little gratitude, He said, O men of little faith.

Faith in future grace, not gratitude, is the source of radical, risk-taking, kingdom-seeking obedience. The temptation to say, God has done so much for me, what can I do for Him, is very great. You see, this is the lay, maybe not the sophisticated theological professional way to say it, but when it boils down to the practical person in the pew, the gratitude ethic or the debtor's ethic comes out like this.

God has done so much for me, what can I do for Him? And we attempt to muster up motivation and power to do things for God out of gratitude for what He did for us. And that's the framework of thought. And I've just been presenting you with a totally different framework of thought.

Because I can't find this one in the Bible. That's the reason. Now why is this one so dangerous? I'm going to end up in just a minute by saying some good things about gratitude.

Like it's essential and if you don't have it, you perish. But that's not saying it's the dynamic by which we obey. There are three problems with this.

We can never pay God back. Not one penny's worth because, here's the fundamental reason, every move we make in love and holiness is a move that God Himself supplies. Remember 1 Corinthians 15.10? By the grace of God I am what I am.

His grace toward me was not in vain, but I worked harder than any of them. Now if you're a gratitude ethic person, what you're thinking there is Paul is looking back, he's thinking how wonderful God has been to him. He is mustering motivation and out of gratitude he's working hard for God to give to God because God's given so much to him.

But that's not what he says. What he says is, I worked harder than any of them, nevertheless it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. Which means every millimeter of obedience is a fresh indebtedness to God.

You go deeper in debt with every millisecond of holiness. You cannot in one instance crawl out of the pit of debt. Glory! I will go deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper and deeper into debt to grace forever and ever and ever and ever and there will never be a settling of accounts because that's the meaning of grace.

And we must help people get rid of this mentality that if God has done good things for me I must now settle accounts or somehow think in a repayment mode or a debtor's mode to try to motivate myself to do nice things for him because he did nice things for me. Rather we think of how can I magnify his grace and the answer is lean on it some more. Depend on it some more.

Eat it some more. Consume it. Love it.

Be satisfied by it. Don't think grace pays our debts to God which sin creates. That's the first reason for why God has done so much for me.

What can I do for him is a dangerous way to talk. Here's the second reason. If we could succeed in paying God back for all he does for us or any of it to that degree we would nullify grace.

And turn it into a business transaction. Grace is free or it is not grace. Grace does not establish an amortization schedule of obedience payments.

If somebody invites you over for dinner and they delight in setting a nice table for you and by everything they do communicate that it is their joy to have you with them that night and they hear you say whispering to your spouse as you leave the front porch Well I guess I'll have to have them over next week. You'll ruin the evening. If you don't let them be gracious to you, if you don't receive this as a gift in which they delight in and turn it into a tit for tat They asked you, now you've got to ask them.

You destroy grace. You destroy the joy giving. Grace is grace precisely because you can't and shouldn't pay it back.

Number three. Third reason why it's dangerous to say God did so much for me. How much more can I do for him? Or how much can I do for him? Thinking of obedience as empowered by gratitude directs our attention backward to bygone grace rather than forward to future grace and in this way the debtor's ethic tends to divert us from the wealth of grace yet to be known and distracts us from the very power of obedience that we need namely future grace.

You can't run your car on gratitude for yesterday's gas. In other words, I'm arguing and I'm going to yet argue for the rest of our time this morning that the way God has enabled us to be obedient in the future in the future in a way that honors him is not by mustering the force of gratitude from past grace but by depending on more future grace. Thus God is shown to be more generous, more sufficient, more abundant, more powerful, more gracious, more kind because there's so much more grace out there in the future and we're leaning on it moment by moment by moment.

One last observation for the positive role of gratitude. I've already said it but I'll say it now in terms of gratitude. Remember, I said we should look back.

We should look at the cross. I should walk over here and I should embrace Christ in the past. I should meditate often on things that have happened in the past.

Meditate on the graces of your life in the past. Meditate on the mighty works of God in saving history. Meditate on creation and on the judgment of the flood and how he rescued Noah.

Meditate on the election of Abraham. Meditate on the precious work of God rescuing Abraham and then rescuing the people from Egypt. Meditate on the mercies in the wilderness.

Meditate on the splitting of the sea and the Jordan River. Meditate on the prophetic words and on David's Psalms. Meditate on the long history and especially on Jesus.

Yes! And let gratitude well up in your heart for all that glorious work of saving grace. Yes! You cannot be saved if that's not happening. Romans 1.21 They did not glorify Him as God or thank Him.

The two great things missing there. But the point of all that is that as you stand here on the waterfall of the present and begin to turn towards the living of this afternoon, gratitude, which is a past tense savoring of God's grace, should become a future tense saving of grace, which I call what? You can find out if you're with me here. Let me say this again.

You've got to think with me. Gratitude, which is a past tense savoring of God's grace, begins to turn toward the future. And as it turns, we don't call it... The Bible doesn't call it gratitude anymore.

It calls the savoring of that future grace what? Faith! So some of you... I hope that sentence right there causes some of you to say, Oh, well then, that's really gratitude. And if that's true for you, fine. I haven't shot your theology out from under you, which is fine.

I'm not interested in shooting anybody's true theology out from under them if it's just the same thing by other words. No problem. But get it.

When you turn, the Bible never, that I know of, now here, I'm not as sure about this as I am about that other one, doesn't talk about gratitude for the future. I do find myself sometimes saying things like, I thank you for what you're going to do this afternoon. Sometimes I say that in my prayers.

And when I say it, I say, well, that's just not quite a biblical way of talking. We should say, I trust you for what you're going to do this afternoon. I savor the goodness and the certainty and the surety and the power of what you're going to do this afternoon.

I lean on it. I bank on it. I hope in it.

That's the way the Bible talks. Gratitude is used for things that have already happened to you that are good. And you've got to feel that.

And that strengthens your faith in future grace. If you've got lots to be grateful for, your faith in the future grace should be increased. So I call gratitude for past grace a feeder for faith in future grace.

2.8 in the outline is simply an affirmation that this is a fight. Faith is a fight. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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