

# Grace and Faith

by Zac Poonen

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*The Christian life is based on grace through faith, and we must receive God's gift of grace and say thank you.*

**Duration:** 25:01

**Scripture:** John 14:6, Romans 3:23, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 3:13, Ephesians 2:8

**Topics:** "Faith Alone", "Gods Grace"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the universal reality of sin and the need for all individuals to recognize their guilt before God. It explains the unique basis of God's forgiveness through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and the importance of accepting this gift by faith. The sermon highlights the distinction between the foundation of Christianity, centered on Christ's atonement and resurrection, and the moral teachings found in the superstructure of faith. It concludes by emphasizing the necessity of living a life of grace through faith, continually receiving God's provisions for every trial and need.

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## Transcript

In the last six sessions we tried to get an understanding about some basic principles that the word of God teaches about the way God made man and what God expects from man. In our last study we saw the importance of free will and of listening to the promptings of conscience and not suppressing the voice of conscience. Now we have to face the reality of the fact that all human beings have sinned.

The Bible says in Romans 3 verse 23 that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. So in God's eyes it doesn't make a difference what religion you belong to. Think of a baby that's born into any religious family, whatever religion it is, or an atheist family let's say.

You look at that baby, it looks like any other baby. What is the difference? Now as those babies grow up and become little children and they're in a school, they all fight, they all quarrel, they all grab, they're all selfish, they all are proud and want to exalt themselves. Every characteristic of Adam's nature is found equally in all those children.

What difference does it make that one belongs to one religion and another belongs to another? Maybe externally there could be a difference. One child goes to a church, another goes to a temple, another goes to a mosque, another goes nowhere, watches television on Sunday morning. But wherever they may go on Sunday, when they come to school on Monday, they all behave just as selfishly as everybody else.

So the change is only external. And even where their parents may teach them to be cultured and to say thank you and sorry, it's all on the outside. They may teach them to be unselfish on the outside, but there's no change of nature within.

God treats all human beings on the same level. You're not a child of God because you're born into any particular religion. You have to choose yourself when you come to an age of understanding.

That goes back to what we said in our last study about the importance of choice. You're not forced to become a child of God just because you were born into a Christian family. No.

You have to make a personal choice that you want to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior. So all human beings have all sinned. Every single person has committed numerous sins, come short of God's standard.

You know, it's like a vessel. Whether the vessel has got one hole or a thousand holes, the water leaks out. And after a little while there's no water in any of the vessels.

Vessels may have one hole, ten holes, a hundred holes or a thousand holes, all the water leaks out. Sin is like that. The Bible says if you've committed one sin or a thousand sins, you're guilty.

It's polluted. It's like one germ is enough to pollute something that has been sterilized. In a surgical theater, the gloves and equipment are all sterilized.

Now you don't need a thousand germs to make it unsterile. One is enough. Sin is like that.

One sin is enough to corrupt a person and make him unfit for God's presence. There's no difference as far as coming into God's presence is concerned between the man who's committed one sin and the man who's committed a thousand. That's why the Bible says all have come short of the glory of God.

They've come short of God's perfect standard. God's perfect standard is 100% and the man who gets 99 fails and the man who gets zero also fails. So once we recognize that, it's important to see that the first thing that God needed to do to restore man's fellowship with him is to find some way to remove his guilt, to get his sins to be forgiven, to remove the guilt of all the things that he's done from his childhood.

Now we need to see on what basis does God forgive us our sins. Now some people say God is a loving God and therefore if I go to him and say I'm sorry, he should forgive me. Well the thing is God has got a dual responsibility not only as a loving father but also as the judge of the universe.

And the universe is established on certain laws. God is a moral and upright God. There are certain things God cannot do.

He cannot tell a lie for example. And he cannot violate his own principles of justice. One example of it would be if I have committed a crime for which the punishment is some large fine and if I'm taken to court and if my own father is the judge there, however much he may love me, he cannot let me go.

Even if I say dad I'm really sorry for what I did, I'll never do it again, he cannot let me go. If he does let me go, he'd lose his job. He'd be violating the principles of justice which he as a judge is supposed to uphold.

So if a human judge whose standard of justice is so small compared to God's infinite standard of justice, if a human judge cannot let the son whom he loves go but has to punish him, how much more God? So God

can't let you go just because you say you're sorry just like my dad can't let me go in the court as if he's a judge just because I say I'm sorry. I may be sincere but I still need to be punished for the crime I committed and there's something else that my dad as a judge could do though and still uphold the principles of justice. Let's say the punishment for my crime is a huge amount of money.

Let's say a million rupees is what I have to pay as a fine and my father is the judge and he writes the verdict you're fined one million rupees or you go to jail and it looks to me as though my dad is being very hard on me. No, he isn't. He's just upholding the principles of justice which he has to do as a judge.

That's what God has to do too. But once he has convicted me and declared the fine that I have to pay he can step down from that chair, take off his judge's robes and come to me as my father, take out his own personal checkbook and sign a check for a million rupees and give it to me and say son, go and pay your fine. You see what he's done? He has upheld the principles of justice.

Nobody can accuse him of showing any partiality to me. He fined me the highest penalty that the law demanded and I can't accuse him of saying he doesn't love me because he paid the penalty himself and what a huge price he paid in order that I might be free. That makes me love him tremendously.

Now this is what God has really done. He says the wages of sin is death. That's the punishment you deserve.

Not just physical death. Physical death is only one part of all that God calls death. Man is spirit, soul and body and everything dies.

It's being cut off and separated from God for eternity. That's what death means. And the Lord says I have to punish you with that punishment.

The law demands it. But then he came down in the form of man known as Jesus Christ and took that punishment on himself. Not only physical death on the cross but when he died on the cross he was forsaken by his father for three hours and he took that spiritual punishment too.

And now I can be free. This is the basis of God's forgiveness. And this is why the message of the Christian gospel is so unique.

Because of two things. How do we know that God accepted the sacrifice of his son on the cross? One proof that after he was buried on the third day he rose from the dead and that was the proof that God gave to man by raising his son from the dead that I have accepted that sacrifice. So if Christ had not risen from the dead then we would have no proof that the father had accepted that sacrifice.

But the fact that God raised him from the dead after three days is the clearest proof that God has accepted his sacrifice. So the basis of God's forgiveness is the unique message of the Christian gospel. Two things.

One, Christ died for our sins on the cross and second, he rose up from the dead after three days. The Christian faith is founded on these two unchangeable facts. And in these two areas Christ is unique.

There is no religion in the world where any leader has ever even claimed to die for the sins of the world. There have been many religions, many religious leaders and there are many religions in the world but none of them have ever claimed to be dying for the sins of the world. That's the first thing.

And secondly, none of them ever rose from the dead. When they died, that was it. They never came out of the grave.

Death is man's greatest enemy. No one has ever been able to conquer it. So that is why we believe that this is the true gospel, the good news because of these two very important facts.

The Christian faith is not a religion of do good, be kind, don't harm anybody, don't tell lies. That's not the foundation of the Christian life. The foundation of the Christian life is that Christ died for our sins and he rose again from the dead.

And the superstructure, you know a building has got a foundation and a superstructure. We need both to complete a building. In the superstructure there are many things that Jesus said which maybe other religious leaders also say.

Don't harm anybody. Do to others as you would want them to do to you. Speak the truth, be humble, respect others and so many good things that the Bible teaches.

But that is in the superstructure. Don't confuse the superstructure with the foundation. You can have windows and doors in the superstructure but you don't have them in the foundation.

The foundation is made of something completely different from what you see in the superstructure. And that is the mistake that so many people make when they say all religions lead to one God. Well, is that really true? In which religion did somebody die for my sins to take away the punishment of my sins? That's my biggest problem that I'm guilty before God and how can I get rid of this guilt? In which religion did someone rise from the dead and prove that he was indeed who he claimed to be? God manifested in the flesh.

In no religion. That's why when Jesus says in John 14 and verse 6 I am the way, no one comes to the Father but by me. It's a pretty bold claim but that is the truth.

People say that we are narrow-minded when we say something like that. That's not my opinion. If it's my opinion you can reject it.

These are the exact words of Jesus in John 14 and verse 6. I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me. No one can come to God the Father except through Jesus Christ.

Doesn't that sound very narrow? But it is the truth. The truth is narrow-minded. Being broad-minded is not necessarily an indication of truthfulness.

For example, 2 plus 2 is 4. That's pretty narrow-minded. Somebody may say why can't we be a little more broad-minded and accept 4.1 also and allow a little on the other side. Why not say 2 plus 2 is also 3.9 according to what somebody else says? And somebody else says 2 plus 2 is 3. Why not be broad-minded and accept that as well? Somebody else says 2 plus 2 is 100.

Be broad-minded and accept that as well. Can you imagine the confusion there will be in everything on earth if we began to be broad-minded about even a simple thing like addition. Truth is very narrow-minded.

2 plus 2 is not even 4.0001. It's 4. There's no other answer. It's something like that. When Jesus said I'm the truth, I'm the way, no one comes to the Father but by me.

Why? Because no one else died for the sins of the world. And no one else was raised from the dead proving thereby that he was who he claimed to be. The son of God.

So this is the basis on which God forgives us. So God can be just now. He can be righteous just like my father can be righteous in telling me you don't have to go to jail, just take this check and go and pay your fine.

But there is one thing I have to do. It's a gift. I don't have to work to get that check from my dad to pay my fine.

I don't have to spend a single day in jail. I don't have to earn one cent of that. But I do need to do one thing.

I need to receive what my father gives me. The check what my father gives me I have to receive it and say thank you. We can say that my father giving me the check to pay my fine is a picture of grace.

And my stretching my hand to take the check from his hand is a picture of faith. So when the Bible says by grace through faith you're saved. This is what it means.

In Ephesians and chapter 2 both these wonderful words are brought together. Ephesians 2 verse 8 By grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works so that no one should boast. Our salvation is by grace through faith.

By grace is my father giving me the check and says son go and pay your fine. Through faith is my receiving the check from my dad and saying thank you and paying the fine to the law of God. And then I'm free.

So everything in the Christian life is by grace through faith. It's not just at the beginning of my Christian life. Our entire Christian life we are to live by grace through faith.

That means God is constantly offering us whatever we need. There's a verse in 2 Corinthians in chapter 12 which says my grace is sufficient for you. The Lord told Paul when Paul was facing a particular problem and the problem wasn't removed God could have removed it but he did not remove it.

It was a sickness that Paul had most probably he prayed three times that God would heal him and he was not healed. The greatest apostle of the Christian church was not healed. He who had even raised the dead healed the sick and cast out demons was not healed himself.

Why did God not heal him? Because he said Paul you're in danger of becoming proud and proud is worse than any sickness you can ever have because if you become proud I have to resist you. That's a law. God resists the proud.

But I can only support people who are humble. I can give my grace only to people who are humble. But you're in tremendous danger of being proud Paul because you've been used so much.

You've planted churches. You've raised the dead. You've cast out demons.

You've written scripture and you've been taken up to the third heaven. You've seen and heard unspeakable things permanently till the end of your life. And so you know what he calls it? He calls that sickness a gift of God.

That's what he says. There was given to me. Given to me means a gift in 2nd Corinthians 12 verse 7. And when he realized the reason why God allowed him to have this thorn in the flesh this messenger of Satan to harass him trouble him all the time he said well in that case I'm content verse 10 the way people cause me distress and persecute me I'm perfectly happy because all these things make me weak and in my weakness I can experience God's grace.

So here it says my grace is sufficient for you. That means in every situation in life please listen to this every trial you may face every temptation you may face every difficult situation you may ever face in your life this promise of God the check is enough to pay the bill whatever the bill is my grace is sufficient for you but I need to do something if I have to pay the bill and my dad is giving me the check I have to receive it and say thank you that's my faith.

So the Christian life is a series of trials tests, struggles and in every one of those situations notice what I said in every single one of those situations God says my grace is enough for you here it is my son take this check you need to pay that bill here's the check tomorrow you need to pay another bill here's the check grace is sufficient according to your present need God has numerous needs but the purpose of them all is to drive us to himself so that we come to him and say Lord this is my bill give me a check I need some grace for this particular problem God says here it is he never refuses because if I come to him acknowledging my need I am humble only a humble person will acknowledge his need a proud person says I don't need God I can handle all that myself but a humble person comes to God and says God I can't handle this this bill is too much for me you got to pay it for me and the Lord says sure here it is, it's a free gift I take it thank you Lord the promises of God in scripture are meant to give us his grace so many wonderful promises but none of them will be mine unless I take them cash those checks see it's like if someone sends you a check and all you do is frame it up and hang it up on the wall you get nothing but if you sign your name on the reverse and give it in the bank you get the entire amount of money that's exactly how God seeks to deal with us he offers us his promises but those promises being in the bible or hanging in our wall don't help us I've got to take those promises I've got to adhere to it and then I can receive everything beginning with forgiveness everything is based on Christ having died for us on the cross and through his death having purchased for us every single spiritual blessing in heaven there is no curse for us now see Galatians chapter 3 and verse 13 it says Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us and why did he become a curse for us so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon us Gentiles God blessed Abraham 4,000 years ago and told him listen I'm going to bless you and make you a blessing to all the families of the earth now it says here that blessing is today for everybody it's not just for that one man it's for you it's for everybody because God gives us the Holy Spirit through the Holy Spirit I can receive all of God's blessings Ephesians 1,3 says he has blessed me with every blessing of the Holy Spirit in the heavenly places in Christ I can take it all and not only take it all through me those blessings can flow out to others it all begins with forgiveness God cleans the channel cleans the cup and it's open to all whatever your religion doesn't matter who you are we got to humble ourselves and say Lord thank you for your gift God bless you

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