



## Stand Firm in God's Grace: Part 5

### Introduction:

Why do we fear talking about grace? Why is it that when a preacher spends "too much time" talking about God's grace folks begin to suspect him of something liberal? Why when a class discussion relies heavily on grace do some Christians feel the need to step in with a little grounding to declare that we don't need to forget all that we have to do? Why do most preachers feel the need to caveat all our sermons about grace saying, "Now I'm not saying we are allowed to sin"? Why? Because there is no point of good news that Satan won't try to pervert to his own ends. There is no good and wholesome doctrine of Christ that Satan won't twist in order to overthrow the salvation of some and even make us afraid to teach what Jesus has said about it. Sadly, some have heard the good news of God's grace and have abused it, misused it, and taken it for granted. Sadder still, others of us have become afraid that everyone will do that, so we steer away from teaching God's grace at all. Even sadder yet is that some who have decided to teach on it are so afraid of abuses that they often use the words of grace but end up discounting its power. What has that accomplished? Only that most of the voices we hear about grace are those who either abuse it or those who discount it. It's hard to enjoy, appreciate, and be comforted by something we don't understand. So, instead, we fear it. We need to understand grace because we cannot be saved without it (**Ephesians 2:5, 8**). In fact, we have learned that if we wish to be saved, we must learn to stand firm in God's grace (**I Peter 5:12**).

We have already learned that if we want to stand firm in God's grace, we must recognize our need, listen to God's Word, hope fully in God's grace, and live by faith instead of law. At this point, our fears are starting to kick in. Not live by God's law? Are we saying we can discount God's law? Are we saying God's law doesn't matter? Are we saying sin doesn't matter? Are we giving people permission to sin? Absolutely not. In fact, these fears bring us to our fifth key for standing firm in God's grace. If we will stand firm in God's grace, we must Keep God's Grace Pure. I hope this lesson will be seen as more than just some big caveat to ease your fears, but rather recognized as a great part of God's plan for us. In order to accomplish this, we need to see two things: 1) the cost of God's grace and 2) the goal of God's grace.

### Discussion:

#### I. The cost of God's grace.

- A. One of the very first things God told Adam and Eve in the Garden was, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (**Genesis 2:16-17**, ESV). In the very beginning we learned the cost of sin. Death. **Ezekiel 18:20** drives the point home. The soul who sins will die. **Romans 6:23** repeats the point saying "the wages of sin is death." This is not simply a matter of physical death. It is not that our bodies are killed and our sins are then paid for. In **Romans 7:9, 11, 13**, Paul said he was dead because of sin. He obviously didn't mean physically, but spiritually.
- B. Adam and Eve sinned. Sin entered the world and, therefore, death entered the world (**Romans 5:12**). But God developed a plan. We may even see the beginning of that plan in **Genesis 3:21**. The ESV says, "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them." God had said Adam and Eve would die when they sinned. Instead, animals died when they sinned. This may well have been the very first sacrifice offered. Whether or not that is the case, we see throughout Israel's history the plan of God. Sin must be paid for. There was a cost involved. That cost was death. But instead of killing the people, they killed the sacrifices.
- C. Read **Leviticus 4:27-35**. When people sinned, they were to bring a sacrifice. They were to bring the best of their flocks or herds. They were to slaughter it and allow the blood to be thrown against the altar. In **Leviticus 16** we read about the annual Day of Atonement in which the sacrifice was offered to bring atonement on all Israel, taking their sins away from them on the "scape goat" and allowing the death of another goat to suffice for theirs. The cost of sin was death. But, there was a problem. Despite the fact that thousands of sacrifices were offered every year by the Israelites, these sacrifices didn't really work. According to **Hebrews 10:3-4**, the sacrifices of Israel didn't really secure forgiveness or salvation. They only provided a reminder of sin. They provided a reminder that the people needed something. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. The fact is the price of sin is so great we cannot pay for it with our flocks and herds. We need something else.
- D. This brings us to **John 1:29**. John had been baptizing. People had been flocking to him believing either that he might be the Messiah, or, if not, he was paving the way for Him. One day, John saw Jesus walking toward him and said to his disciples, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (ESV). What a price! We could not pay the cost of our sins, so God paid it. Peter says of it in **I Peter 1:17-19**, "...you were ransomed from

the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (ESV).

- E. We need to affix this cost in our minds. The cost of our sins was our own death. The cost of God’s grace was the death of His Son, Jesus. We need to think about what this means. When we believe grace is the permission to sin we cheapen grace. We are saying that my sin is worth Jesus’ death. Every time I lie, gossip, cheat, steal, lust, rage, covet, or whatever it is that I do, that costs Jesus’ death. This is the amazing thing. Even though we lie, gossip, cheat, steal, lust, rage or whatever we do, God was willing to offer Jesus. He did that while we were sinners (**Romans 5:8**). But there is a huge difference between the person who strives to overcome, relies on Jesus, and is forgiven when he fails and the person who values Jesus’ death so cheaply that he just gives himself to more sin.
  - F. Thus, we have Paul’s statement in **Romans 6:1-4**. Does the teaching of grace set us free to continue in sin? May it never be! When we were baptized, we were baptized into Christ’s death. Think about that. The price for grace was Jesus’ death. When you think grace, don’t think of some disembodied ethereal entity floating in space. No. When you think of grace, think of Jesus on the cross. Do you think Jesus died for your lying, cheating, stealing, lusting, raging, coveting, or whatever it is that you do just so you could keep doing it? Of course not.
  - G. If you want to stand firm in God’s grace, don’t cheapen it. However, there is an inherent struggle for us. I can’t help but think of some of my friends in college. I remember one young man in particular. His parents paid for everything; he paid for nothing. Did he value his college experience? Did he learn great lessons to lead him to be a productive part of society? No. He partied and his parents paid. He failed classes and his parents paid. He got drunk and wrecked his car and his parents paid. I remember one night, while drunk, he got so crazy he decided he wanted to see his friend in the next room. Did he walk out his door and knock on his friend’s door. No. He tried to beat a hole through the wall. What did his parents do? They paid. The problem was the more his parents paid, the more he took their payment for granted. We must be careful. The nature of sin and grace is that we can’t possibly pay for our sins. Someone else has to pay for them. God did pay for them in Jesus. However, if we wish to stand firm in God’s grace, we must not ever take the cost for granted. We must not cheapen God’s grace.
- II. The goal of God’s grace.
- A. What is the goal of God’s grace? **Romans 7:24-25** provides part of the answer. The goal of grace is not permission to continue sinning. Rather, it is the power to overcome sinning. We have already learned that we need God’s grace because we have become enslaved to sin. We cannot overcome sin. Having sinned, sin has taken over. A law of sin and death is in our members (**Romans 7:23**). We cannot beat it. We are wretched and miserable. However, we can be delivered. We can have victory. That victory only comes by the grace of God. Was the goal of God’s grace to let us continue in sin? May it never be! The goal of God’s grace was to set us free from sin.
  - B. **Titus 2:11-15** explains the goal of grace. The goal of grace was to set us free from our sins and then train us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. The grace of God sets us free from those things we’ve done so we can turn away from them, not overcome by them, or enchained to them. God’s grace trains us to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives even in this present age. We must not pervert the grace of God into sensuality (**Jude 4**). We must not view the freedom that Christ gives us as an opportunity for our flesh (**Galatians 5:13**). When we do that, we aren’t standing firm in God’s grace, we are discounting God’s grace and abandoning it.
  - C. The great blessing of grace is that when we sin we do have an advocate with the Father (**I John 2:1-2**). He is the propitiation for our sins. Grace does mean that when I sin, I don’t have to abandon God thinking He wants to abandon me. But we must keep God’s grace pure. We must not cheapen it or discount it. We must remember why we came to God’s grace to begin with. We came to God’s grace because we wanted to do right and delighted in God’s will, but we couldn’t (**Romans 7:21-23**). We came to God’s grace because we hungered and thirsted for righteousness (**Matthew 5:6**). Do not let Satan twist the wonderful message of God’s grace in your heart such that you decide God’s will and way no longer matter because of His grace. That wasn’t the goal of His grace. His goal was to empower you to follow his will and way. Let it stay that way.

#### Conclusion:

The cost of God’s grace was the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. The goal was your purity and holiness. If you want to stand firm in God’s grace, don’t lose sight of either of these principles. Don’t let Satan pervert God’s grace and make it of no effect in your life. Keep God’s grace pure.