

Grace – Part 3

Welcome to the Grace of God, Part 3, September 19, 2007. In our last session we looked at the transcendence of grace. Today we're going to move on to the topic of "accessing the grace of God"; particularly accessing the greater grace as Scripture calls it. Now why should we care about accessing the grace of God? Because last time we reminded ourselves in Ephesians 2:7 that the reason for creation, the reason for the allowance of the fall, and the reason for the redemption of man was to declare the grace of God for the ages to come. In the absence of creation; in the absence of the fall; and in the absence of redemption then the grace of God would have been forever largely unknown. The grace of God is the greatest revelation of the love of God. We're told in I John 4:8 that God is love. Well, the greatest manifestation of the love of God is His grace. And except for the sequence I just reviewed for you, that grace as testimony of the God Who is love would have been largely unknown. Now God relates to all things through judgment or through grace. His judgment testifies of His love of righteousness; because God is love, but God doesn't love only you. He loves you, but He also loves righteousness; which is another way of saying He loves what He is, which is why He will never do a single act of unrighteousness because His love of Himself and His passion to remain pure is so great. That's why He's faithful.

So His grace testifies of His love for you and the only way He can fulfill that love with you is by grace because you can't earn His love. Judgment after grace is for disciplinary purposes. So briefly stated, we can think of God's judgments as functioning in several different categories. For the unsaved, if they remain in that condition until death which leads to condemnation and eternally so, God is displaying His love, but He displays His love of righteousness and His hatred of all unrighteousness. But for us as Christians, His judgments have different meaning. With salvation He displays His love of you and He displays His love of righteousness because He pays the price through His own judgment of His own Son to pay for all of your unrighteousness. So His judgment was used, but His judgment was heaped upon His Son where His Son paid the price for all of your sins, receiving the fullness of the wrath of God, being forsaken by the Father so that you could spend eternity with Him. That's the testimony of His love of His righteousness because He couldn't excuse His Son Who had the sins of the world upon Him. And God never excuses sin. God approaches sin by one of two ways: judgment on you or judgment on His Son.

Then after salvation, God continues to display His love of you and He displays His love of righteousness. That's why He judges the Christian for disciplinary purposes—to bring about purification, to mold you into His very likeness; because He has a passion to be one with you; but He cannot become one with that which is unholy. So any unholy remnant in you, in your unrenewed mind, has to be gone to totally fulfill God's passion to be one with you. So the discipline of God is to fulfill His love. His judgment is also upon you for discipline to bring about His love of His righteousness. He has a passion to remain one with righteousness and He can't remain one with righteousness and become one with you when you yet have unrighteousness in you. So the judgment of God upon the Christian is for disciplinary purposes unto purification, unto oneness with Him, to fulfill totally His love with you.

And then at death for the Christian; we go to the judgment seat of Christ. But there we're judged for varying levels of rewards in Heaven, but not judged with any condemnation. So we have to

separate and stratify these aspects of the judgment of God so we don't take judgment and look at it as a negative feature of our holy God. So God, Himself, in the person of Jesus came to Earth in the form of a man, the ultimate revelation of God Himself to man, to fulfill the Gospel, provide the Gospel to us. And Luke 2:10-11 reminds us – Behold I bring you good news of great joy. Unto you this day is born for you a Savior Who is Christ the Lord. Not born unto you a judge; that's why it's good news. God could have stayed in Heaven and judged the world; but He couldn't have stayed in Heaven and saved the world. And had He stayed in Heaven and judged the world that would not have revealed His grace for the ages to come. So God has revealed Himself to all of creation for the ages to come by coming to Earth in the form of His Son, to accept the judgment of God upon all sin so that we can be with Him for all eternity and be trophies of the grace of God.

Now Jesus not only came, but He came in a certain way. We're told in John 1:14 that Jesus came full of grace and truth. He came full of grace and to reveal to us the truth about grace—namely that it is all by the grace of God. Remember, truth is what God is and how God views everything else. So the way God views this is man could not come to Him except God display His grace. That is the amazing grace of God, the transcendent grace of God. So the greatest grace of God is to give us truth; and the greatest truth of God is that He relates to man through grace. So truth and grace are united in a way where they can be distinguished but not separated. So everything exists to testify of the grace of God which testifies of the love of God for God is love. Every revelation to man by God, not only testifies of the grace of God, but is by the grace of God; because no man ever has merited a revelation of God to man. So the revelation is of grace, testifies of grace, it's by grace, it brings grace to us. That's why it was written in I Peter 1:13 – we're told to fix your hope completely upon the grace brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Fix your hope completely. Your optimistic expectation is to be fixed completely on the grace of God brought to us through Jesus the Son.

So everything created testifies of the grace of God. This revelation of God is by the grace of God; and this grace of God is our only hope. That's why we're told to fix all our hope upon it because it is the only hope which is based on truth which is how God views reality. All other hopes are figments of the mind of man, which are contrary to how God views reality; because the way God views reality man is hopeless except for the grace brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Those are the reasons why we should be careful and care about fully accessing the grace of God and not just a little bit to allay our anxieties. So accessing the greater grace of God, accesses the abundant life for us and accesses the more valid testimony of the grace of God to others. After all, how can we give valid testimony that the only hope is in Jesus Christ if we're not placing all of our hope upon Jesus Christ.

So when we looked at grace, there was a common grace given to all men. So all men have some of the grace of God. All men benefit from the grace of God. But not all men benefit from the grace of God equally. We also saw that there is uncommon grace, the grace which is not given to all men equally. Some are saved, some are not. But of all men who are saved even, not all men benefit maximally from the grace of God. Some access the abundant life; some do not. So with common grace, why do not all benefit equally? With uncommon grace, why do not all benefit maximally? The answer in each case is that grace is made available by God, but it must then be accessed. So, how is the grace of God accessed? James 4:6 – But He (God) gives a

greater grace. He gives a greater grace. God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. So the pathway to access the greater grace of God is to walk in humility before God. I Peter 5:5 – And all of you cloth yourself with humility toward one another for God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble. Well, why does Peter tell us to display humility toward others when we're talking about humility before a holy God? It's because our attitude toward God is displayed by our attitude toward others. I cannot be more faithful to my God than I am faithful to my wife. If I am not faithful to my wife, I can guarantee you I am not being faithful to my God. Scripture even tells us that you can't love God Whom you haven't seen if you don't love man whom you have seen. So I don't love God one whit more than I love the least of you. I do not humble myself before God one bit more than I humble myself before man. So the revelation of our attitude and behavior toward each other is in part the revelation of our attitude toward God. Because the qualities that we desire with which to relate to our God can be assessed by how we display them to each other, including humility.

So why does God resist the proud? It's because the proud resists God. God, through His grace, has revealed Himself to every man. Romans 1:20 – For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power, His divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made so that they are without excuse. The "they" is every human being is without excuse. Every man (imagine that!) is without excuse because God has displayed Himself through His creation to such a degree that the only way to ignore that is to suppress the revelation of God in unrighteousness, in self determination. Now man divides himself into two broad camps based on two Scriptural criteria in regard to their response to that. Romans 1:28 – And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer. So the first criterion is to acknowledge God or not. All know that He exists; we're already told that. The only proper behavior is to acknowledge God. So what does that mean? To acknowledge God means to know that He exists and to behave as if He exists. Even Satan does that. Can man do less? Satan knows that God exists; he behaves as if God exists. But some men don't even do that. Can you imagine? The atheist declares that God does not exist. The agnostic declares that God may or may not exist and both behave as if He does not exist. So neither will even acknowledge God.

The second criterion: Romans 1:21 – For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God. Here we see that the ante is upped with the second criterion. A person may fulfill the first criterion and acknowledge God; that is to say to know that God exists and to behave as if God exists; but then fail the second criterion which is to honor God (not a little bit). You see we honor God by being here, we honor God by reading our Bible, we honor God by praying, but we can do all of those things and not honor God as God. This is the Christian who lives in the flesh, not in the spirit, bringing glory to himself, not glory to his God. This is the lukewarm Christian. This is Satan.

So pride can, therefore, be defined as that quality in a being that precludes or prevents the fulfillment of these two criteria. It is not sufficient to know that God exists. All men do. It's not sufficient to acknowledge God. That is to say, to behave as if He exists. Even Satan does that. It's not sufficient to honor God in part. The carnal Christian does that by living life in the flesh after salvation and not in the spirit after salvation. The carnal Christian has accepted Jesus as Savior, but not accepted Jesus as Lord. The only sufficiency based on these two criteria is when

a being knows that God exists, behaves as if He exists, honors Him, and honors Him to the point of withholding nothing from Him which is to honor Him as God. Anything less than that is pride. The point is that God exists and He's the only thing in all of existence worthy of any honor; thus, He is worthy of all honor and that is to honor Him as God. John 4:23 tells us that we're to worship Him in spirit and in truth. God is truth. Truth is what God is and how God views everything else; and this is simply the truth. We're to worship Him in truth based on how He views all things, not based on our opinion of what He says about things. Titus 1:2 tells us God cannot lie. Well, He can't lie because He is truth. That's why God tells us the truth. Well, what is the truth? Isaiah 48:11 – I will share My glory with no one. Why? Because there's no other thing worthy of any glory before a holy God. So if God told us anything else, then He would not be telling us truth. That's why we're to give Him all glory because anything less than that is to participate in a lie by lying that something else is worthy of glory when compared to our holy God. Humility is that quality in a being that fulfills both of these criteria. To know that He exists, to behave as if He exists, to honor Him, to withhold no honor from Him, which is to worship Him in truth because the only thing worthy of honor is God Himself; and that's how God views reality and God cannot lie. That's why we're told to worship Him that way...giving Him all honor.

There really are only two types of human beings speaking in broad categories. Those who are pro-Christ and those who are anti-Christ; because God Himself has told us that He is summing all things up in His Son. Even when you get to the book of Revelation, remember, you have the two camps: pro-Christ, anti-Christ, the mark of Jesus or the mark of the beast. There are going to be only those two camps. And in fact, there are only those two camps now. But there are varying degrees within each camp. To look at that, let's remind ourselves of the purposes of Jesus Christ. The model for someone or a being who is 100% anti-Christ is Satan and I'll explore that. John 10:10 (the first part of the verse) – the thief (speaking of Satan) comes only (only, not comes in part) comes only to steal, kill and destroy. Satan does nothing else. Well, to steal, kill, and destroy what? Well, remind ourselves of the purposes of Jesus. Luke 19:10 – for the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. John 10:10 (the second part of the verse, Jesus says) – I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly. So Satan is 100% anti-Christ because he comes only to steal, kill, and destroy that which would cause an unbeliever to believe in Jesus Christ and that which would cause a believer to access the abundant life that Jesus Christ came to give the believer. Therefore, Satan is 100% anti-Christ; so he is 100% proud and 0% humility based on how God views reality.

That's why Jesus came for the third purpose (I John 3:8) to destroy the works of the devil; because the work of the devil is to destroy everything that is what Jesus came to give. Now all human beings appear to be a mixture and have at least a little bit of humility. Even Satan worshippers to some degree humble themselves before Satan, even if not before God. Even atheists will admit that there are some things that they do not know, just not about God, about whom they presume to know everything. About things that are knowable, they do not presume to know everything which is humility. But of the one thing that is fundamentally unknowable, they presume to know everything which is the maximum of pride in a human being. Whatever part of any human being (including us as Christians) that is not 100% pro-Christ is pride. Anything within us that is 100% pro-Christ is humility. So God's grace is to reveal Himself, to fulfill His purposes. Thus, God's grace is given to the humble because God will not give the extra grace to

that which is opposed to His purposes. That's why God does not give extra grace to the proud. Pride is functioning as anti-Christ. Pride is, therefore, resisting the purposes of Christ. And since God's grace is to fulfill His purposes through Jesus Christ, then God cannot give extra grace to that which is opposing His purposes or God would be opposing God. Thus, God opposes the proud because the proud oppose God. God gives His extra grace to the humble because the humble is the one who is joining in the pro-Christ purposes of God and is truly honoring God as God by bringing all glory to His Son.

Well, how far back can pride be traced? Well, we all know the answer to that. The first manifestation of pride was when Lucifer rebelled against God; because Lucifer could not accept being in a position below God. That, in fact, is the root of all pride. As you know, Lucifer led one third of the angels in Heaven in rebellion. God then cast them out of Heaven. They still function in the spirit realm. Lucifer is now called Satan; but the function of Lucifer and his fallen angels is 100% anti-Jesus Christ.

Well, what about the first evidence of pride in a human being? That goes back to the first human beings namely Adam and Eve. Recall they were commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and then Satan offered up his temptation. Genesis 3:5 – For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So Satan had now offered his own motivation which is to be like God to tempt man. The temptation is to be dissatisfied with any position, any part of yourself, that is not in the highest position. Paraphrased, Satan had told them, if you obey God you will remain in an inferior subservient position. If you disobey God, you can become like God and God knows that and that's why God told you not to eat. So by disobedience Adam and Eve did not honor God as God. Thus, they disobeyed and that's what pride will always do. It seeks to become like God, to become its own god, apart from God. Humility seeks God to let God tell it what it is, what it is to become, and how it is to become it. Thus, God gives His grace to the humble and obviously not to the proud. So based on the example of Adam and Eve, pride can be defined and understood in the light of other frames of reference in Scripture and we'll look at a few of those. But fundamentally, it is the desire to be your own god, to be in self determination. That's why self is the root of the flesh, the flesh is the root of the system of this world, the system of this world is the kingdom of darkness under its king, Satan. But it begins with the desire to be like God, to be your own god, to decide yourself what truth is instead of coming to God to let Him teach you what truth is.

So I previously described the root of all sin as being the judging of God. In order to disobey, Adam and Eve had to judge God in His entirety. They had to judge that God was not operating in their best interest. They judged that God was withholding something of great value from them that they would be better off if they had it. They judged, thus, that God did not love them because He wasn't operating in their maximal best interest. They judged that God was selfish because He was trying to withhold the highest position for Himself. They judged that they could judge better than God could judge what they should have, by what method they should have it, when they should have it, and that any position beneath the highest position was intolerable. Imagine that! This goes way beyond eating the fruit. Thus, they judged God; they pronounced themselves as the judge of God, and by that frame of reference, pride can even be defined as that quality in a being that positions itself to judge God in any aspect. Well, is it any wonder that

God will oppose that behavior? Humility then is that quality in a being that positions itself under the judgment of God in all aspects. God is the judge. That's the truth. Thus, God gives His grace to this one because this one says how can I, a finite created being, judge the One Who is transcendent, Who is holy, Who is other than, Who alone is worthy, and Who created me, and so on. How can I, the pot, judge the potter? And that's why it took Job all the suffering that he underwent because that is the final little kernel of himself, remember, that thought he could appear before a holy God and argue his case before Him. And God says, will you condemn Me that you may be justified? But that's the part of the heart of all men, including us as Christians, that needs to be dead.

Another frame of reference is the fear of the Lord. That means, of course, the awe and reverence of God. Scripture tells us that holding God in awe and reverence, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all knowledge, the beginning of all understanding, and the beginning of all wisdom. That's why there are some men who seek the truth but never come to the truth because the truth is they have to hold God in awe and reverence to even know what truth is and they never do that. Scripture tells us that Adam and Eve did not function in the fear of the Lord. Had they held God in awe and reverence, they would not have disobeyed Him. Pride can thus be defined as the absence of something like dryness is the absence of wetness. Darkness is the absence of light. So pride is that condition of the inner man that is operating without the fear of the Lord. Humility is that condition of the inner man that is produced by the fear of the Lord. So is it any wonder that God opposes the proud who does not regard Him as holy, as worthy of awe and reverence? Because remember if you're not holding that creator God of Genesis 1:1 in awe and reverence, you can never be in awe of anything because there's nothing that approaches even that God of Genesis 1:1. And if you're not in awe and reverence of that Being, you can't be in awe and reverence of anything; and if you can't be awed by anything, then you're awed by yourself. That is self worship.

We went through a comparison of flesh versus spirit. I toss this up just to remind us. The flesh has as its basis self. The spirit has as its basis God, but since in these latter days God has spoken to us in His Son, then for us the basis of all thinking, analysis, and behavior is Jesus Christ Himself. Truth in the flesh with self as the basis is defined as what I say including what I say about what God said. The truth in the spirit realm, with Jesus as the basis, is what God says and God has spoken to us through His Son so Jesus is the truth; so I even learned what truth is by regarding Jesus as the basis of every thought, word, and deed in my life. But if you drop down to number 7, you see self image. So pride can be defined as the self image of self when self is the basis for all analysis, interpretation, and decision making. Humility is the self image of self when Jesus Christ is the basis of all analysis and interpretation and decision making. So we've been through these before and I don't want to belabor the point. Remember, there are two other posters, each containing 8 other variables by which flesh is compared with spirit. And pride functions in the left under the flesh with self as the basis in all 24 whereas humility functions in the right column with Jesus as the basis in all 24. So there could not be a greater contrast between pride and humility than comparing flesh versus spirit using these 24 variables. So when you look at that and contemplate it, is it any wonder that God opposes the proud and gives His grace to the humble? Because pride is always flesh with self as the basis functioning in self determination, judging God, while humility is always functioning with truth being what God says, specifically truth being Jesus; thus, having Jesus as the basis for all analysis and so on. So

we're told to worship God in spirit and in truth. Well, this is the truth because this is how God views reality. The proud have their hearts far from Him, in the flesh, which is hostile toward God because in the flesh dwells no good thing because the flesh is in self worship with self as the basis.

So having looked at pride and humility, using these various frames of reference, I am now going to make various comparative statements. There'll be a bit of redundancy in this but it's redundancy to hammer home the point.

- Pride disagrees with God. Humility agrees with God in all things and in totality about all things.
- Pride is self worship. Humility is God worship.
- Pride says I probably do not need a savior, but if I need one, I need a much smaller one than the rest of you. But humility says I must have a big Savior because in me dwells no good thing.
- Pride focuses on what it earns. Humility focuses on what Christ earned for us.
- Pride has faith in self. Humility has faith in God and only faith in God and faith in nothing else.
- Pride blames God for deprivation. Humility seeks to learn the spiritual blessing in the deprivation and to glorify God in the midst of the deprivation because God doesn't change so why should my worship of an unchanging thing change based on circumstances?
- Pride says I can figure it out. Humility says I can only know what that which is unfathomable chooses to reveal, so I will ask, seek, and knock for the greater revelation.
- Pride says I reject that which I do not understand. Humility says my God, thank God, is bigger than my understanding.
- Pride is quick to speak. Humility is quick to listen because it knows it has much to learn
- Pride is quick to anger. Humility is slow to anger because it knows the anger of man never begets the righteousness of God.
- Pride takes the first seat at the banquet as it presumes that as its proper position. Humility takes the last seat and waits for God to convict others to invite humility up to our position and is content even if it does not occur.
- Pride grumbles because it thinks it deserves better than it is getting. Humility gives praise and thanksgiving and constantly so because it knows that there's never a moment that based on its own righteousness, that it didn't deserve Hell, but is living a glorified life here on Earth worshipping his God and looking forward to eternity future even in a glorified body, earning none of it and receiving it through the grace of God. So humility is constantly giving praise and thanksgiving. That's how we come through the gates and doors and into the presence of God. It's with thanksgiving and praise because that's what humility does before a holy God because it knows it could not even earn coming into the presence of God.
- Pride assesses its own performance. Humility looks at and expresses the performance of Jesus Christ by which all blessings come.
- Pride says I bring value to God. Humility says all of my value comes from God. I can't even tell you what value is except God tell me what value is. And the value is whatever He assigns to it, not what I think about it.

- Pride seeks improvement in self. Humility denies self, fixes its gaze on Jesus; and thus, is transformed into His likeness because you're never transformed into the image of God by looking at self.
- Pride boasts of self. Humility boasts only of Jesus Christ and Him crucified because that's the avenue by which all blessings come.
- Pride expects to get what it deserves. Humility praises God that it never gets what it truly deserves.
- Pride tells. Humility asks.
- Pride measures. Humility points to that which is immeasurable.
- Pride is unteachable. Humility is teachable and hungers to be taught.
- Pride says I bless God with whatever I give. Humility says God has blessed me with that which I give back to Him and that which I keep.
- Pride says I will declare what is and is not a blessing. Humility says all things work together for good before my holy God; so I live in blessedness.
- Pride says if I lift myself up, then I can draw all men. Humility says if Christ be lifted up, He will draw all men.
- Pride's effort is to achieve. Humility's effort is to die, that Christ may be more fully revealed to others without self in the way.
- Pride says I'm aware of nothing unclean in myself and I'm the judge if there is or isn't. Humility says even if I'm aware of nothing in myself, I'm not by that acquitted for there's another Who judges and His judgments are just, His judgments are true, and I cannot presume to judge anything including my state of cleanliness before a holy God.

And the list goes on, but I can see my time is up. So we'll stop for today and pick it up next time.