



“Tuesdays” with Pastor Jake

Where Theology Touches Life

Tuesday, August 20th
in the year of our Lord, 2024



A Biblical Worldview – *Mercy and Grace*

“For by grace you have been saved through faith.” Ephesians 2:8



You probably never received one, nor your children but I would guess one of your grandchildren or even great grandchildren may have received one. It’s known as a ‘participation trophy.’ One doesn’t receive this because they played well, or achieved some notable success. They receive it just because they ‘participated,’ and their coaches didn’t want them to feel left out (it might hurt their self-esteem 😞). We didn’t receive trophy’s like this, because – and I hate to you use the phrase – *in our day*, trophies were won on the basis of merit! Sports in ‘our day’, is (and was) a pure ‘meritocracy’ – you brought home a trophy because you *earned it!*

A lot of life is like that.

You get a good grade, because you studied and so earned it. You get a promotion, because you worked hard and wisely, and so you earned it. You win the Master’s by one stroke, because you played well and so you earned it. At the end of a work week, you receive a pay-check, not because of the generosity of your employer, but because you ‘earned’ it through your labors. You move up in rank because you earned it.



Sadly, far too many people think this is true in terms of our relationship with God and for our hope of heaven. Many think if one is fortunate enough to get into heaven and enjoy the life eternal, it is because they have ‘earned’ it. One would never be so bold as to say it out loud, though it seems to resonate deeply in our hearts – many people feel they deserve a seat at God’s table because they earned it, as though heaven is a meritocracy!

Remember Reb Tevye from Fiddler on the roof? daughters. When the first three daughters were to be con’s of how their marriages were contracted. At one with himself. He reasons one point, then says *‘on the*



He was the poor milkman with five married, he had to weigh the pro’s and point in the movie he is having a debate *‘other hand...’*

With this in mind, let me slightly adjust two very clarifying statement made by, Tim Keller (the late pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian in NYC). He once said correctly, “Traditional religions says, ‘I give God a good moral record, so he has to bless me.’” *But on the other hand* Tim Keller also said, ‘The gospel says, ‘God gives me a good moral record through Christ, so I want to bless him.’ He goes on to say, “Religion says, ‘If I obey, then God will love and accept me.’ *But on the other hand*, “The gospel says, ‘God loves me and accepts me, therefore I want to obey.’”

The difference is profound.

A Biblical World View emphasizes ‘mercy’ and ‘grace’. The words are closely related. ‘Mercy’ is unmerited favor. Meaning it isn’t deserved or earned. If mercy is earned or deserved, it wouldn’t be mercy, it would be ‘justice.’ None of us deserve mercy. God is able to extend is forgiving mercy to those who deserve nothing but His disfavor and wrath because Jesus bore the curse of the sin for all who would believe in him. In speaking of God’s mercy, Spurgeon reminds us:

*“His mercy is so great that it forgives great sins to great sinners,
after great lengths of time, and then gives great favours and great privileges,
and raises us up to great enjoyments in the great heaven of the great God.”*

Some people never receive mercy because they do not ask for it.

‘Grace’ is somewhat similar. It is God’s unmerited ability awakening and enabling people to believe in the Lord Jesus and to follow after Him. In a disconcerting time in Paul’s life, he was reminded that God’s grace (ability) was sufficient for his every need. The good news of the Gospel is that God gives grace to the humble *and* that He is able to humble the most hardened of sinners. This happens sovereignly through the preaching of the Gospel when God calls a person and they believe.

I'm reading a great book. It's by Andy Wilson (a British Pastor and Apologist). It's called Remaking the World, How 1776 Created the Post Christian West. Let me close by quoting him at length – it bears repeating:

“Grace has always been one of Christianity’s most striking features. The claim that God in Christ takes the sin and death of the world upon himself, in order that he might freely and incongruously give his righteousness and life to those who do not deserve it, is without parallel in any other system of belief, religious or otherwise. In a world powered by works and measured by achievement, there is something deeply refreshing about the unmerited, transforming favor of God, given without regard to the worth of the recipient. Rebellious wastrels return home to red-carpet welcomes (i.e., the prodigal son); work-shy vineyard workers receive far more than they deserve; tax collectors and sinner enter ahead of Pharisees and Bible teachers; last-minute converts enter paradise on the same terms as everybody else. The message is entirely pitched at those whose works do *not* measure up. As preachers never tire of pointing out, there is a chasm of difference between the last words of the Buddha (“Strive with earnestness!”) and the dying words of Christ (“It is finished!”). For the Christian the focus is not on the individual and the question is not: “*Have I done enough?*” After all, anyone with a modicum of self-awareness will cheerfully admit that the answer is no. The Focus, rather, is on Christ, and the question is: “*Has he?*”

Tim Keller once wrote: “*The gospel says you are simultaneously more sinful and flawed than you ever dared believe, yet more loved and accepted than you ever dared hope.*”

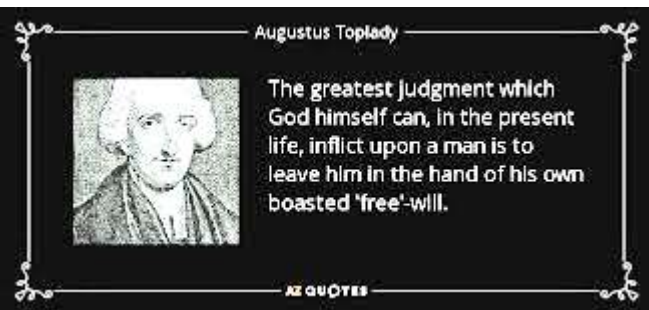
That’s mercy and grace – and it’s for all who will humble themselves and believe upon the Lord Jesus.

Words and Lyrics by Some Great Hymn Writers:

Augustus Toplady:

“From the moment of conversion, grace introduces a total change. The renewed sinner abhors himself, as in dust and ashes, for all that he has done, and can never sufficiently adore, admire, and revere that infinite goodness which, instead of turning him into hell, has turned him to God, and made him a living monument, not of deserved vengeance, but of unmerited mercy. And may such of us, as are awakened by grace, to the experimental knowledge, love, and imitation of Christ, be led, farther and deeper, into acquaintance with God, and communion with his blessed Spirit: gaining, day by day, brighter evidences of our election to eternal life, and more substantial marks of our interest in the covenant of grace.”

In 1776 he wrote the lyrics to “Rock of Ages.”



*Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee!
Let the water and the blood from thy riven side which flowed
be for sin the double cure, cleanse me from its guilt and power.*

*Not the labours of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands;
could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,
all for sin could not atone: Thou must save, and thou alone!*

*Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.
Naked, come to thee for dress, helpless look to thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly: wash me, Saviour, or I die!*

*Whilst I draw this fleeting breath, when my eye-strings break in death,
when I sore through worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee!”*

John Newton: (Author of Amazing Grace)

Newton wrote: “By nature we are separated from the divine life, as branches broken off, withered and fruitless. But grace, through faith, unites us to Christ the living Vine. How inviolable is the security, how inestimable the privilege, how inexpressible the happiness, of a believer! How greatly indebted to grace! He was once afar off, but he is brought near to God by the blood of Christ: he was once a child of wrath, but is now an heir of everlasting life.”

John Newton and William Cowper: (From the Olney Hymnal)

*“Run, John, and work, the law commands,
yet finds me neither feet nor hands.
But sweeter news the gospel brings: it bids me fly and gives me wings.
To see the law by Christ fulfilled
and hear his pardoning voice,
changes a slave into a child and duty into choice.”*