

Msg #148 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

"A Definition of Grace"

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about the concept of being led by the Spirit of God. In Romans 8:14 we are told that those who are led of the Spirit of God are considered to be the Children of God. If you are a child of God, then you are led of the Spirit of God. And, I suppose that all you who are listening today consider yourselves to be children of God. However, if being led of the Spirit of God is a prerequisite for being a child of God, then it would probably be a good idea to know what being led of the Spirit of God is all about. How does it work? What's the difference between those who are led by the Spirit of God and those who aren't?

In the Old Testament Israel was a chosen nation of God who were given a covenant from God. It was a covenant of law. It was the Ten Commandments, the law given by Moses, and it was God's covenant to them. The Bible says that this covenant was the Law, which was written and engraved in tablets of stone. This refers, of course, to the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses. God himself had written the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone with his own finger.

Today Christians also have a covenant relationship with God. However, the covenant that Christians have with God is not a covenant of law. It is a covenant of grace. Of course, every Christian knows that we are under God's covenant of Grace, but how many Christians actually know what the true definition of grace actually is? In today's church, Satan has done a fine job of destroying the true definition of grace, and has substituted another definition which sounds

good on the surface, but is really a profound deception which destroys our covenant relationship with God. If we are to fully comprehend this new covenant, then it is extremely important to understand what the proper definition of grace really is. So, this is what the term, grace, means. Grace means, divine influence. It is God's goodness which directly influences us through the Holy Spirit of God. Contrary to what is circulating among church people today, the true definition of grace is not, unmerited favor. Actually, unmerited favor is a definition of God's mercy. When we are wicked, we deserve to have God's wrath poured out onto us. However, because God is merciful, he doesn't give us what we truly deserve, but has mercy on us. We don't deserve it. There is no merit which can be attributed to us. God's mercy is unmerited, and he died for us instead of destroying every last one of us. But this is not a true definition of grace. It is very similar, but it is actually a definition of God's mercy. The real definition of grace is actually the goodness of God which comes upon us through the action of God's Holy Spirit. Let me say that again. Grace is the goodness of God which comes upon us through the action of God's Holy Spirit. Grace is goodness which we receive directly from God rather than accomplishing it by our own works. Under the Law of Commandments, we obeyed the letter of the Law because it was written out for us. But, under Grace, we obey the word of God which is written on the fleshly tablets of our hearts by God's Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God which moves us to do this or to do that, not a set of written commandments on tablets of stone that we read.

I'm sure this is difficult to comprehend, but here, let me show you something. Let's take a look at a verse which gives us some insight into what grace really is. The verse is 2 Peter 3:18, and it tells us to grow in grace. Now, to grow in grace is a good thing, otherwise the Bible wouldn't tell us to do that. However, think of this. Grace is the divine influence of God. Therefore, when you read 2 Peter 3:18, and include the definition of the word grace, it fits very well. Here, listen to this. "But grow in the divine influence of God's goodness." You see? This is proper. This is what this Bible verse is saying. We should grow in God's goodness by being led by his divine influence. This is what being led of the Spirit really means. We want God to influence our lives toward righteousness and holiness. We want more of God's goodness in us. And this is exactly what 2 Peter 3:18 is telling us to do, is to get more of God's goodness by allowing his Holy Spirit to influence our lives. However, look what happens when we insert today's common definition of grace into this Bible verse. You can readily see how the definition of grace as, unmerited favor, doesn't fit at all. Listen to this. "But grow in unmerited favor."

Did you hear that? If we use today's common definition for the word, grace, of unmerited favor, then this verse would actually be telling us to grow in unmerited favor. We do want the favor of God, but we certainly don't want to grow in unmerited favor. We don't need to get more wicked just so that God can have mercy on us.

O.K., O.K! I know this is difficult, but just realize this one thing. The true definition of the term, grace, is divine influence of God's goodness. God influences us and causes us to be a holy and righteous people. He influences us through the moving of his Holy Spirit. Therefore, the covenant of grace that God has made with his people is a covenant in which we become his

children, but only as a result of God's direct influence on our lives as we are led by his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God which influences us to act and speak in righteousness and holiness. So, in order for us to enter into a covenant relationship with God, we must allow his Holy Spirit to influence us. We must allow the goodness of God to be imparted to us by subjecting ourselves to the influence of his Holy Spirit. We must receive the influence of God's Spirit in order to be good. It won't happen by observing a set of commandments and ordinances written with ink or in tablets of stone. Unless we receive the goodness of God, we will not be a holy people. Unless we receive the goodness of God, we will not be able to walk in righteousness, nor be obedient to God's word. You see, it is the Holy Spirit, in the first place, that guides us into all truth. It is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to do the will of the Father. It is the Holy Spirit of God that causes our hearts, as earthly vessels, to be broken and remolded into spiritual vessels of God. John 4:23-24 says, " But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

You see, we are required to enter into a covenant relationship with God. It is no longer a covenant of the Law of Commandments. It is a covenant of grace. And, the term grace describes the manner in which righteousness comes upon us. In the Old Testament, God first established a covenant relationship with the Children of Israel. This covenant was a covenant of law, and was established upon the two tablets of stone which contained the ten commandments. In addition to these ten commandments, there were other rites and rituals, including animal sacrifice and physical circumcision, which were requirements of this Law. In order to have a relationship with God, Israel was required to keep the Law of Commandments, and also the other ordinances contained in this Law. However, because the flesh nature of mankind is so strong, no man could keep the Law perfectly. Every single Israelite, and also every other person in the world, was condemned because their righteousness fell short of the righteousness that the Law required.

But in Galatians 3:24 we read that the Law was our schoolmaster. This means that the Law was created by God for the purpose of instructing us. What we learned from the Law of Commandments was that man was inherently sinful, and that no man could keep the Law perfectly, and therefore, everyone on the face of the earth was condemned to an eternal death. The result of the first covenant was that it brought no salvation, but rather condemnation. However, God used the nation of Israel to demonstrate the complete spectrum of living according to God's word, and through this tiny nation God demonstrated what happens to everyone who does not have a Savior. This is the purpose of Jesus Christ, to be the Savior of the world. It is through the salvation of Jesus Christ that man has the promise of eternal life. However, by the covenant of Law, no man had salvation. On the contrary, everyone was condemned to hell. But God used the nation of Israel to demonstrate the futility of being able to be good just by trying to keep a set of rules. It was impossible. But, the good thing that came out of Israel's covenant was that this tiny nation went through almost 2000 years of life experience in order for God to demonstrate what the Christian church would go through in the 2000 year period of their covenant. The covenant of Law with the Children of Israel set the stage for the Covenant of

Grace which would ultimately come to the whole world through the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The covenant for Christians is not a covenant of Law. It is a covenant of Grace. It is an agreement between God and all those who believe to receive goodness directly from God instead of trying to accomplish it by keeping a set of rules. The covenant of Law was not designed by God to bring about righteousness. It was never intended to be the method of bringing about holiness. Righteousness and holiness could never come by the strength of man's own endeavor. It comes by entering into a covenant relationship with God by receiving the goodness of God directly through his divine influence. When we are led by the Holy Spirit of God, we then become the children of God. We then become chosen people of God who are entering into a covenant relationship with him, as Paul said, in a new and living way.

You see, it is by the Holy Spirit of God that the goodness of God is transferred into us. When we believe God, and also believe in Jesus Christ, then God sends his Holy Spirit into us in order to bring about a restoration within us. When we begin our walk with God, the righteousness and holiness of God begins to come upon us through the influence of his Holy Spirit. This is why we are told that true worshipers must worship God in spirit and in truth. Sure, every confessing Christian confesses the truth of God's word, because they believe the word of God is absolute truth. However, just believing the word of God is only the beginning. As it tells us in James 2:20, faith without works is dead. We are saved by faith in God, but if we are truly saved, if we truly do believe the word of God, which includes the testimony of Jesus Christ, then our works will follow. If you really do love God, then you will do works which show it.

Just saying that you love God is not enough. You have to actually demonstrate it by your actions. When your actions are in opposition to God, then it is an absolute certainty that you're not a Christian, no matter what you confess to be. Confession is not just that Jesus Christ is the son of God, but true confession is that he is both Lord and Savior. The word Lord means master. Your master. If you don't demonstrate this, then your confession is a false confession. James 2:26 says that just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. You can't pull the wool over God's eyes by a false confession of Christianity. Maybe you can fool yourself, but you're not fooling God.

When we worship God in truth, we worship him according to the truth of his word. However, when we worship God in spirit, we can only do this by allowing his Holy Spirit to move us to works of righteousness. This is not because of a set of laws that we try to keep. It is by allowing the Holy Spirit to actually influence us directly. It is by the Holy Spirit of God that we are empowered to be vessels of righteousness. The covenant of grace is a covenant whereby we enter into a holy communion with God through the conduit, through the liaison, of the Holy Spirit. It is the same thing which brought power to Jesus Christ. In Matthew 12:28, Jesus is explaining to the Pharisees that it was by the Holy Spirit of God that he had power to cast out evil spirits.

The power of God only comes upon flesh and blood humans through the influence of the Holy Spirit. When we are born again, we cease trying to work our way into righteousness by keeping a set of laws. However, when we are born again, the Holy Spirit of God comes in and abides in us and makes the way to accomplish God's will just through the divine influence of God himself. It is not by an earthly priest that we gain access to God. It is by the Holy Spirit of God that we begin to demonstrate the goodness of God. God is manifested in the earth through his body, which is the church. The church is moved about on this earth by the influence of the Holy Spirit. If you do anything righteous, it can only be accepted by God if it comes from your heart. And, we cannot take credit for it in any way. Our righteousness is only demonstrated when God himself is manifested through us, and, he is only manifested through us by the influence of his Holy Spirit on us.

Listen as I read Luke 11:13. It says, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

You see, righteousness does not come because you try to be good. Righteousness comes by faith in God. When you believe God, then the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from sin. This is what brings eternal life. However, in order for us to really be changed, it can't be just a confession of our lips. God isn't interested in just lip service. He wants our works to follow our confession because he wants children who truly have a heart for him and not just a bunch of brats who care more for the things of this world than they do for God. If you have no works, then it is evident that you don't truly believe the word of God. If you truly do believe that the word of God is good, then you will do good. If you just do evil, then this demonstrates that you really think evil is good. If you follow Satan, then you are demonstrating that you think his way is good. It isn't just your lips that will get you into heaven. If your heart proves that the confession of your lips isn't true, then you will go where all liars go.

Now, in order to do the works, you can't rely on just trying to be righteous by keeping a set of rules. You must enter into a covenant relationship of grace whereby you are moved by God's Holy Spirit to do good. It is only when God finds a place to abide within you that he can move you to do works of righteousness. Unless your works of righteousness are a direct result of God's Spirit moving you, then it wasn't your heart that was moved, it was your own will. You won't accomplish the righteousness of God by your own will. You will only accomplish the righteous works of God by God accomplishing them for you. When you allow the Holy Spirit of God to work through you, then it is God who is the power to do good, not you. You can keep a million laws, and it won't do any good unless the laws that you keep are in direct response to the moving of God's Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:3 tells us that we outwardly demonstrate God by keeping commandments which are written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit rather than by demonstrating commandments that are written with ink or on tables of stone. It is the Holy Spirit of God which writes the commandments of God on our hearts, and we do not need a set of commandments written in tablets of stone. Unless our works are directly caused by the influence of God's Holy Spirit, we have not really entered into a covenant relationship of grace. Grace is only achieved when the Holy Spirit influences us directly. This is what grace really is. It is

God's divine influence in which he causes us to be righteous by directly moving our hearts himself. We can't be good in ourselves. We can only be good when we are led and empowered by God's Holy Spirit.

There are many people today who try to please God by following a set of rules. They think that the way to determine what is right and what is wrong is just to follow their own, or another man's, interpretation. Yet, even if we do keep a set of laws, it will not prove that we are good. It is only God who is good. This is what the Law of Commandments demonstrated. No matter how hard you try, you cannot accomplish goodness. It is only God who is good, and therefore it is only God who is able to accomplish that good in you. When you are moved by the Holy Spirit within you to do something, then you cannot take credit for it. When it is the Holy Spirit that moves you to do something, then you must realize that the credit for that good thing must go to God himself. This is what is meant by being led of the Spirit. As Christians, we must be led of the Spirit in order to call ourselves the children of God. If you just keep a set of rules, if you just try to keep the Ten Commandments, then you will not actually be accomplishing anything good. No man can be good by their own attempt at righteousness. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that our own attempt at righteousness is no better than filthy rags. The only way we can accomplish goodness is to let God be the one who acts and speaks through us.

Now, there are some who claim that being led of the Spirit is just an excuse to do your own thing instead of being obedient to God's word. But this is not what being led of the Spirit of God is all about. If you use the concept of being led of the Spirit just to do your own thing, then the spirit you are led by is not God's Spirit, it is an evil spirit. If you are truly led by God's Spirit, then you will fulfill the will of God.

And, let me leave you with this question. Which will accomplish God's will the best? Trying to obey the word as written in ink or in tablets of stone like the Israelites had to, or, aligning yourself with the very spirit of that word of God? Myself, I would rather enter into the spirit of God's word than take a chance of just following my own interpretation of scripture, or even worse, following someone else's interpretation of scripture. The Holy Spirit is what guides us into all truth. I would rather worship God in truth and in spirit than to worship him in just truth.