

Living In The Balance Of Grace And Faith: Part 1

Written by Martha Hultgren

At our *Gospel Truth Seminars*, I always take time before meetings to talk with friends and partners. One of the most common questions I'm asked is "What do I need to do to receive the blessings of God?" It is usually followed by this explanation: "I have been praying, reading my Bible, going to church, and paying my tithes, yet I don't seem to be able to get my prayers answered."

In that question and explanation lies the root of the problem: *They have fallen into the trap of linking God's response to their performance.*

They have not properly understood the balance of grace and faith and their relationship to each other.

By definition, the word *grace* means unmerited, unearned, undeserved favor. Therefore, the good news is, grace has nothing to do with you. Grace existed before you ever came to be. Another way of saying it is, grace is God's part. *Faith* is defined as being a positive response to what God has already provided by grace. In other words, faith is your positive response to God's grace, or faith only appropriates what God has already provided for you. Therefore, *faith is your part*

Grace and faith work together, and they must be in balance.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. Sometimes we read a passage from Scripture that is so familiar, we don't stop to think about what it is really saying. In this verse, a profound truth is being declared. It says we are saved by grace through faith, not one or the other. Think of it this way— *grace is what God does; faith is what we do.* It takes both working together to receive salvation.

Salvation is not dependent on grace alone. If it were, everyone would be saved and going to heaven, for God's grace is the same toward everyone (Titus 2:11). He has already given the gift of salvation to everyone through Jesus. It is by faith that a person receives what was done 2,000 years ago.

Most of us believe that in order to be saved, we need to ask God to forgive us of our sins, but that isn't what the Bible teaches. In 1 John 2:2, it states that Jesus was the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world. Jesus didn't just die for those He knew would accept Him; He died for every sinner who has ever lived on this earth. And He died before you or I ever committed a single sin.

Here is a radical truth that would get me kicked out of most churches: Sin is not an issue with God! The Lord isn't waiting for us to ask Him to forgive us of our sins. The sins of the entire world—past, present, and future—have already been forgiven. Even a man like Adolf Hitler had grace extended to him! Jesus loved Hitler and paid for his sins just as He did for yours and

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mine. God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11).

God has already done His part; it is now up to you to receive the truth by faith and make it a reality in your life. Amen!

John the Baptist said in John 1:29,

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. In John 16:8-9, Jesus said,

And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me. The church often misinterprets this scripture and preaches that the Holy Spirit is here to convict you of all your sins. That is not what the Holy Spirit is here to do. He is here to convict you of the single sin of not receiving Jesus as your Savior. The only conviction is that of believing in Jesus Christ.

People do not go to hell for committing adultery, stealing, or even murder. Those, like all sins, have already been paid for. This is what the Bible says in John 16:8-9—*the only sin that is going to send people to hell is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.* So, stop magnifying sin in your life!

The message that much of the church is preaching causes us to become conscious of sin instead of conscious of righteousness (Rom. 3:19-22). It also causes us to link our performance to all the other blessings of God.

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