

Answering Questions on Faith Friday Episode #207

It looks like Faith Friday's are pretty much a hit. We're getting lots of feedback from people saying keep bringing them, we like them. Last week I did episode 204 which was called, What's So Amazing About Grace? It was well received, but also kicked up a lot of questions, so I thought I would answer some of them and recap some of the discussion we had about that topic on this week's episode.

So just to bring you up to date. In last week's faith Friday episode 204, I was talking about how I respond to questions about why I'm so hung up on or why I emphasize so much the teaching about grace. A lot of people think this is just one doctrine, one teaching in the body of the Christian faith that is one among many. My contention is that it's not just one among many it is actually the Gospel itself. The Gospel is not getting an internal eternal insurance policy, saying a prayer so you won't go to hell. That's part of it but it's so much more than that.

In John 10:10, Jesus is talking about the enemy, the Devil and in 10:9 He says, that the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy and I have come so that you may have life and have it more abundantly. That's grace. I didn't just come to stop you from being destroyed I came so you could have an abundant life. I believe that having a revelation of the true gospel of grace and the fact that that is the Gospel, that you have God's unmerited favor and it flows to every part of your life, your physical health, your financial well-being, your relationships, your jobs, your work.

God cares about every part of your life here on earth, not only in Heaven, which we think of as eternity, as if eternity could be somehow separated from right here right now. We're in eternity you can't be outside eternity unless you're God.

We talked about the fact that grace is the reason why we can live without fear of death, because we know that death only leads to a higher state of

existence where we're in the presence of God, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

We've accepted his gift of grace and the abundance of righteousness that is ours, and so even when we do stupid things, even when we sin, even when we willfully do bad things we're not "out of fellowship" with God. I talked about how we don't have to beg and plead every time we sin to make sure we're

"prayed up", so that if something happens to us in the next hour we won't die and go to hell. I said that your sins are forgiven past, present and future and

I'm sorry for the recap, for those of you who listened to last week and you feel we're in the same episode again. No, I'm leading to a point. I just want to make sure those who weren't with us last week will understand the conversation today.

We got lots of positive feedback. Many people were refreshed and responded well and then we had some honest questions. I want to read you pieces of a conversation I had that I thought was worth sharing with the community at large. You may not have read the comments on the blog.

Sam wrote in to say, thanks for sharing your views. I always appreciate people who put effort into reading the Bible. If, as you say, all of your past, current and future sins are already forgiven, why did Jesus suggest in Matthew 6:9-14 that Christians were to pray to the Father that He forgive us and that if we weren't forgiving towards others then He wouldn't forgive us. Why pray for something we already have? If we already have it how is it possible that He wouldn't forgive us based on our behavior of not being forgiving?

I told Sam I appreciated his comments and his question and here's my answer. This is a question that a lot of people ask. I asked this question when I was first introduced to the concepts that grace is the gospel. I had the same question, how can it be that Jesus says, Sam's referring to the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father, who art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses/sins/debts, just as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory. Amen.

I learned it in the King James and it's probably mixed up with NIV and ESV and NKJV, if you're trying to sort out which version I was just quoting.

That point aside, I think we have to consider, was Jesus giving instructions to Christians when He instructed the disciples in the Lord's Prayer? Was He or was He teaching his Jewish disciples how to pray while they were still under the Old Covenant? Remember, when Jesus gave these instructions He had not yet been crucified. He had not died, been buried and resurrected. As we read Scripture we need to consider who the original audience was, how would they have heard the words that were spoken and what would it have meant to them? What does it mean to us now in view of the things that separate us? Culture, time, geography, Covenant.

In the case of the disciples who heard Jesus teach this, they would not have had any concept of Christ's forgiveness for all sin through His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection, because that had not happened yet. It's clear in each of the Gospels that that none of them understood any of this before it happened. I think all of them except John, still didn't understand it after it happened, until Jesus came back from the dead and explained it to them.

So I made that case to Sam and he said yes, Jesus was specifically sent to talk with the Jewish people and Sam quotes Mathew 15:24, but then he goes on to ask the question that comes up a lot during this discussion. Again, it's a common question and this is why I thought it was worth sharing this part of the conversation with you.

The question was, are you suggesting everything Jesus said before his resurrection is not applicable to Christians, or just some things? Sam didn't say what I'm about to say, but the implication when most people ask this kind of question is, are you just picking and choosing what you want to accept from Jesus before He was crucified and resurrected? Sam asks the question, Jesus modeled prayer, suggesting topics to pray about including the sanctification of the Father's name, the coming of His kingdom, His will to be done on earth, receiving our daily bread, forgiving our trespasses, being forgiving toward others, all seem to be basic to the Christian faith.

Then Sam says, "Given you don't pray for forgiveness of your sins, do you abstain from the other topics on the list?" I never said that I don't ask for forgiveness from my sins. I don't believe I have to ask for forgiveness over and over again, because that's clearly not taught in Scripture. I do believe

that when you love someone and you do something that hurts them, our natural in-born response is to want to sooth that hurt.

Think about it. If you accidentally hurt your children, like stepping on their toe when they're young or you say something callous to your mate and realize that was mean and you see the look of wounded-ness on their face. Don't you immediately have this response in your heart of oh honey, I'm sorry I didn't mean to hurt you. You have that remorse for having hurt the one you love. In that sense, I absolutely, when I realize that I have sinned then I do ask for God's forgiveness, as in I'm so sorry, I know this hurts you I'm so sorry. Please forgive me and I immediately follow that up with, I know you already have, but I just have to say it.

So it's a principle that grace empowers us to do the things that could never make us righteous under the law because we just couldn't keep them all, all the laws and rules.

What do I think about sanctifying the Father's name, the coming of His kingdom, His will to be done on earth, receiving our daily bread, forgiving our trespasses, being forgiving toward others, all seem to be basic to the Christian faith? I do all that to greater and lesser degrees of perfection, but I don't believe my salvation hangs on that. If it did, if my salvation was up to me as these questions would suggest, then I'm in trouble and so are you and so is everyone else. I don't know anybody who can live the perfect Christian life.

It's been said the Christian life is not difficult it's impossible. So, I don't believe everything Jesus said before His resurrection is non-applicable to Christians. I don't even believe that most things He said are not applicable to Christians. What I do believe is that we have to think about who He was talking to, for what purpose, how it applies to us today especially considering which Covenant we live under, before we adopt it as a normative behavior for Christians in this age.

Jesus attended synagogue and celebrated Passover. Should we do that? He did it with His disciples. He told the rich young ruler to sell everything he had and give the money to the poor. Should we do that? So yes, I do pray for the forgiveness of my sins. I do practice those other principles that are spelled out in the Lord's Prayer, but those are not the things that save me. I'm not saved by my works, I'm saved by faith through grace. And from a place of grace those behaviors flow from my natural newly created being.

You might ask, why aren't we perfect? Why do we still do these things? Why do we still sin? Why do we still hurt people? Why do we still have feelings of unforgiveness in our heart if we're made into new creations? I think the answer is given to us by Paul in Romans Chapter 12, where he says, 'we should not be conformed to the pattern of the world, but we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds.' It's a process of being transformed.

We live under a new and better Covenant the Bible says. The New Covenant grants us grace, pardon, unmerited favor. Right believing, receiving grace from the Lord Jesus leads to right behavior.

Sam went on to answer gracefully, I think, in somewhat disagreement with some of my points but I largely don't disagree with the things that Sam had to say. For instance, in one place he says that even though perfect forgiveness is extended through grace, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't make our appreciation for this free gift a matter of daily prayer by acknowledging our sins and that forgiveness continued to be extended by means of the value of the sacrifice of Jesus.

One thing I want to highlight in this conversation is this passage where Sam says, 'by forgetting to regularly focus on our sinful nature and the forgiveness that comes through grace, we risk losing our appreciation and becoming like those mentioned in Jude 4, who used grace as an excuse for bad behavior.

Where I respectfully have a different opinion is whether we should focus on our sinful nature, whether we even have a sinful nature. We are new creations. Either we're new creations or we're not and if we are then do we have a sinful nature? In the book of Hebrews, the writer makes it clear that the empowerment of grace helps us enter into a place where we don't have sin consciousness, because if you think about your sin all the time guess what you're going to do all the time? I think, rather than constantly confessing our sins which God already knows, so He doesn't need a field report. We should be confessing our righteousness.

People will say that we are convicted of our sins even after we're saved, because Jesus says that when the Holy Spirit has come, John 16:8, "He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." You have to read the whole passage to understand exactly what the Holy Spirit is convicting whom of.

Let me read it and unpack it for you and give you a suggestion on how you can become less sinful and more filled with an awareness of God's grace. Jesus says, 'now I go away to Him who sent me and none of you asks me, where are you going? But because I have said these things to you sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away the helper will not come to you. He's talking about the Holy Spirit.

If I depart I will send Him to you and when He has come He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.

Jesus says He will convict the world of sin and He does go on to say righteousness and judgment, but listen carefully to what the rest of the sentence says. Of sin, because they do not believe in me... the people whom the Holy Spirit convicts of sin are those who do not believe in Jesus. If you believe in Jesus, the Holy Spirit is no longer convicting you of your sin. He goes on in verse 10 to say, of righteousness because I go to my Father and you see me no more. Now He's speaking to His disciples, who will become the 12 Apostles.

We know they were saved after Jesus was resurrected. So the believers, the Disciples of Christ are convicted of righteousness and what about judgment? Jesus goes on to say, of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged. Who's the ruler of this world? According to Scripture, at the time Jesus was talking, it was Satan. He was given the keys to the world by Adam in the garden and Jesus took them back.

So my point in going to this passage is to suggest to you that yes, a heart filled with grace and love for your savior will be contrite when you have sinned, fallen short. Yes, that's true. Yes, you will spontaneously want to apologize for something, even though you've been forgiven for it already. The Holy Spirit is not convicting you of your sin He's convicting you of your righteousness.

Scripture says that we are the righteousness of God in Christ. In II Corinthians 5:21 it says, 'for He (God) has made Him (Jesus), who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.'

So, when the Spirit does illuminate for you that your behavior is not consistent with who you really are at the core of your being now as a new

creation, I believe that's what happens. I don't believe He convicts you of sin, I believe He illuminates the disparity between how you're behaving and what your true identity is. It's why Paul says elsewhere to believers, why are you acting like mere men, like mere humans?

When we are put in the situation of realizing we've fallen short we shouldn't run away and grovel and hope God forgives us and doesn't send us to hell. We should run to God. We should ask Him. We should invite him to convict us of our righteousness, so that even when we behave in a way that is less than who we are, even when we egregiously sin, we are still the righteousness of God in Christ.

This is something that I practice, especially when I fall short, when I sin. I know that God has forgiven me and I say to Him, thank you that you've already forgiven me for this and I invite you to convict and remind me that I am the righteousness of God in Christ, especially in this moment. I believe that by focusing on our righteousness, which is a gift, the more we focus on that and the one who gave it, the less we will behave in these sinful ways.

I hope that helps clear up some of the questions that arose from last week's episode. I don't think grace gives us license to just be evil reprehensible people and get away with it. There are consequences in this world for behaving that way, but I do think that your sin isn't powerful enough to overcome God's forgiveness. When you've accepted Christ you are in His righteousness, you are in Him, you are safe.

This will probably spur some more questions, so put them in the comments at RayEdwards.com/207. If you enjoyed the show and get value from it than give us some feedback, either in the comments on the website or subscribe to the show in iTunes using the iTunes podcast app from Apple. That's how we get ratings credit in the charts.

Our next episode is on Monday and it will be a full-fledged business episode of the Ray Edwards Show. I hope you'll tune in for that.

Until then, I pray that God will continue do more for you than you can ask or possibly imagine. I pray that He will give you a revelation of His righteousness that rivals that of the Apostle Paul. Peace to your house.

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