

Weekly Reflection – Abiding: Working with God by Grace Through Faith

John 15:1 - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

- Jesus is the True Vine, He is the source of life, love, power; the source of everything we need.
- We live moment by moment with Him and dependent upon Him. (Future grace)

John 15:4-5 - Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. [5] I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

- We find our true identity as a branch abiding in the True Vine.
- **Galatians 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

How do we live this abiding life, or this crucified life? How do I live moment by moment by grace? How do we live more and more like who we really are in Christ?

By Grace Through Faith

Ephesians 2:8 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

In other words, we don't earn God's grace. We don't deserve God's grace. Grace is a free gift. How is it that you're made right with God? You are saved by grace through faith. **Grace initiates and faith participates.** Example: John 3:16 - Grace was initiated, "For God so loved the world, that He sent His one and only son." Faith participates, "that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." Jesus asks you to meet His grace with your faith. Grace initiates, faith participates.

Faith is obedience, it's trusting, believing and acting like you trust God. Faith is trusting that God's way is best and acting like it. You make the decisions you make because you believe or have faith that the decision will benefit you more than doing something else. If you don't give it's because you believe keeping will benefit you more. If you don't forgive it's because you believe that will be to your advantage. Faith that pleases God, faith that makes you more like Jesus, is faith or trust that God's ways are better, they will benefit you more, and the ultimate benefit is intimacy with God, experiencing the love of God, pleasing God, all of which glorify God.

So, we do act, we do work, we do obey, we do. Faith is action, doing, work, obedience. A.W. Tozer, "It's not the "do" of merit; it is the "do" of condition. What must I do to receive the benefits of the Lord Jesus Christ into my life?" How do we act, do, obey in a way that is not our doing, not our effort, not our strength?

We Work with God.

2 Corinthians 6:1 - Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

Paul saw himself as working with God, with Jesus, with the Holy Spirit. That's much different than working for God or like you're in debt to God and trying to pay Him back. **1 Corinthians 3:9-10 - For we are God's fellow workers. (We are laborers together with God) You are God's field, God's building. [10] According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and**

someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. Do you see how grace initiated, “according to the grace of God given to me” and faith participated, “I laid a foundation” and “take care how you build.”

Have you ever thought about the fact that there is a way to receive the grace of God in vain? Vain is the idea of empty or it has no result. Paul is appealing to them and us that we do not receive God’s grace in a way that is empty, that does not lead to the intended result. ***Galatians 2:20-21 - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. [21] I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*** “Nullify grace?” We can nullify grace by working in our own strength. Illustration: You’re hungry, your whole family is really hungry, but you have no money to buy food. I come up to you and say, “Here is \$150, go to the grocery store and purchase the food you need to feed you and your family.” (that’s grace) You take the \$150, put it in your pocket, and go make up a sign that says, “Will work for food”, and you go out to earn the money you need for food. The grace I gave you was received in vain.

Here is a practical “tool” that may help you abide in Jesus, live moment by moment dependent on grace:

APTAT

A = admit

- Admit that you can’t do it in your own strength, admit that you don’t want to try and do it in your own strength, admit that you want to stay in the chair of grace. Admit that you are utterly dependent on Him for everything.
- ***John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.***

P = pray

- You ask for help. You acknowledge that you need God’s help. You acknowledge that unless God helps you you cannot bear fruit that glorifies God.
- ***Hebrews 4:16 - Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

T = trust

- You trust in the Word of God. You trust in a promise of God.
- ***Romans 8:32 - He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?***
- ***2 Corinthians 1:20 - For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.***
- Through Jesus, because of the Gospel of Jesus Christ we have access to every promise of God.
- A.W.Tozer - “We might remember singing a little Sunday School chorus that says, “Every promise in the Book is mine.” But we neglect to realize that it is one thing to believe a promise and quite another thing to appropriate it into our lives. It is like a man stumbling in the darkness of the night, not able to see his hand in front of his face. His companion asks, “How can you see in the darkness?” “Its all right,” the man might say, “I have a flashlight in my pocket.” Simply having a flashlight in your pocket does not light your way until you pull it out and turn it on. Simply believing the Bible does no good until we pull those promises of God out of the Bible and by faith appropriate them into our lives.”

- How do we appropriate these promises into our lives?

A = act

- This might seem so obvious that it wouldn't need mentioning. But it does because there are some who say that since Christ is supposed to live His life through you ("I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me."), you should not do anything, simply let Jesus change you with no effort on your part. This is simply not what the Bible teaches. The Spirit of God does not cancel out our will. The work of God does not cancel out our work. **1 Peter 4:10 - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.**
- Grace initiated, now we participate by faith, which is obedience, trusting and doing something with the grace. You received grace now use it.
- We hear the Word of God, a promise, a command, an encouragement (that's grace) and we trust it and act upon it.
- The question is never, "Is there grace?" The question is, "Will you participate by faith?" Or will this gift, this grace be given in vain? Will you ignore this grace given to you and nullify this grace?
- **When grace initiates and our faith participates then the power of the Holy Spirit activates.**
- Every moment of every day there is grace available to you, will you by faith participate?

T = thank God

- Thank God for the good that comes.
- **1 Peter 4:10-11 - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.**
- God gave the help, God gets the glory, and that starts with our thanks.