



I Can Do It Myself!

Then Do It!

It is obvious that grace for eternal life is “harder” than grace for the day-to-day mundane and small issues of life. What is obvious, however, is not necessarily true! In reality, the most difficult grace to grasp is that which is physically, mentally, financially . . . within the realm of possibility but, nonetheless, that which will not be done without grace:

- Stopping smoking
- Watching what we say
- How we think
- Putting in an honest day’s work
- Exercise

We must, in these cases, humble ourselves, accept the fact that while maybe I can, I somehow am not doing what I want. Paul knew that the spiritual (and the spiritual often drives the physical, mental, financial . . .) amateurs didn’t/don’t admit or comprehend:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! Ro 7:14 - 24

At what point do we admit (humble ourselves) that we cannot do those things that are conceivably possible (and which many others can do), much less accomplish the larger issues like conquering and overcoming death?

Christianity is not a religion of a “leap of faith” (hoping and expecting, without any tangible current evidence, that when I die everything will be OK). Nor, is it a religion of doing the “best I can” with the same expectation. Christianity, if we dare believe the *Bible*, is one of “little” graces now leading to a greater and greater belief and trust in Jesus Christ – what He says to do now to be prepared for the “big day” (death). That is why the devil is not concerned with people being deceived in thinking they are saved (by reciting a prayer, being baptized, going to church, giving to the church, trying to fulfill the law . . .). What he can’t tolerate are those who seek to become and grow as Christians – taking Christ to their work, seeking Him on how to earn/spend our money, desperately seeking Him and His truth in their marriage relationship, raising children . . . the everyday affairs of life most people handle fairly well, thank you very much, without any thought that they need Him!

Time and time again, Jesus (like other *Bible* writers) makes it abundantly clear that it is not trying or even doing Christian “works” that pleases God, but only that we are becoming/are Christians! Any child can do many of the things your children do, but they aren’t your children by doing these things – only your children (like only God’s children) are real sons and daughters!

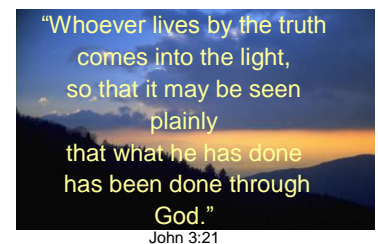
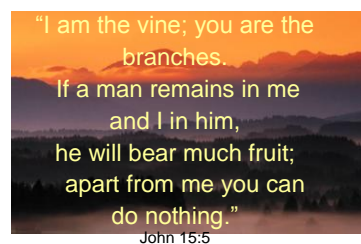
Counterintuitive as it is, little humility (and grace) begets big humility (and grace). Not the other way around. Daily humility (and resulting grace) here and now is the only reliable foundation for weekly, monthly, yearly, life and eternal grace. Or as David found:

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,
who daily bears our burdens. Ps 68:19

And conversely, if the Lord does not daily bear our burdens (if, instead, we bear our “small” daily burdens, ourselves, the best we can – by “hook or crook”) we should not expect Him to be our Savior for eternity! “Well, honestly, I want God to save me eternally, but I had rather be able to do my own thing now – depending on Him now may come with the cost of having to do what He wants me to do – I want to do what I want! I can handle things now myself! I am not really interested in God, what He says and wants; I have more important and fun things to do – read the *Bible*? Yuck! In fact, I want to avoid the *Bible* at all costs because I will probably read something I need to change – my ignorance is very blissful! I agree that a little of Jesus Christ I good, but I don’t want to go overboard with Him . . .!” People may not say these things, but this is how we too often live – if we were honest, rather than hypocritical, this is what we would often say!

Paul started with reality to explain how/why to get and train in grace whereas the world ignores the clear realities of their inadequacies, sees the “possible,” therefore rejecting the need for grace (humility) and find “what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do . . . I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” Yet, unlike Paul, they are not able to find the answer to “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Like any exercise, grace is a discipline built through training and perseverance. Grace is certainly all a gift (or it is not grace). That said, it is a gift with conditions – it is not a contradiction to expect conditions on gifts. No sane parent would give their children money if they expected the child would use it to buy drugs; they would only reasonably give (grace) a gift if they expected the child to be responsible with it – otherwise the gift would be a curse, not a blessing. Grace is God’s good gift, given for a purpose, the power to do that which we otherwise would or could not do on our own making us able to say:



An Important, Practical and Everyday Example

Almost everyone knows it is important to exercise (even if only concerned with cosmetics which exercise has a major impact on) yet they don't do it! Is it impossible or superhuman to exercise? Is exercise outside our abilities? No, even those in their 80s and 90s can exercise and benefit from it tremendously. Yet most people do what is far harder – they settle for feeling bad, going to doctors, taking medicines, dieting, making excuses (I don't have time, equipment) . . . doing anything and everything that simple exercise would more easily accomplish. Exercise is an example of grace that is hard to find and take because our thought process says "I know I should exercise! Others can and do, so I should be able to as well . . . What is wrong with me . . ." instead of humbling ourselves before God saying: "LORD, I know I should be exercising because it will dramatically improve my health in the right way (rather than looking for the foolish methods like dieting, 'eating right' . . .). But that said, I can't without your help and grace! I don't know why I am so weak, but I can't . . . help me develop the desire and discipline to do what is right! Please!"

As just one example, finding God's grace for this day-to-day mundane and small issue of life will help in "finding" grace for eternal life. "But, I didn't know religion had anything to do with issues like exercise, my job . . . besides exercise is so boring . . ." (as if most of life is one great thrill after another - think mundane – life is mostly "vanilla" with the challenge being finding contentment and happiness in the everyday ordinary!). Yes, the most difficult grace to grasp is that which is physically, mentally, financially . . . within the realm of possibility but, nonetheless, that which will not be done without grace:

Christianity, unlike other religions, is not a religion of a "leap of faith" (hoping and expecting, without any tangible current evidence, that when I die everything will be OK). Nor, is it a religion of doing the "best I can" with the same expectation. Christianity, if we dare believe the *Bible* (to believe it we must read it – and read it regularly!), is one of "little" graces now leading to a greater and greater belief and trust in Jesus Christ – what He says to do now to be prepared for the "big day" (death). The devil is not concerned with people being deceived by thinking they are saved (by reciting a prayer, being baptized, going to church, giving to the church, trying to fulfill the law . . .); what he diligently works to destroy are those who seek to become Christians – taking Christ to their work, seeking Him on how to earn/spend our money, desperately seeking Him and His truth in their marriage relationship, raising children, their health . . . the everyday affairs of life most people handle fairly well, thank you very much, without any thought that they need Him!

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,
who daily bears our burdens. Ps 68:19

Anyone expecting grace when they die, who is not now experiencing it, is foolish!
Life has many burdens – it is a blessing to have a God who promises to help us now and later!
This is Grace – this is the Gospel!

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