

Great Questions People Ask

Week 3 – God’s Empowering Grace

Questions arise from a variety of scenarios.

- If you’re a two year old – questions arrive from a sense of curiosity and discovery and while “**Why?**” may be cute the first 100 times, it can drive parents crazy.
- Often questions arise from a sense of hurt or betrayal: “**How could you do that to me?**”
- Sometimes, questions are asked of God out of confusion or a desire for things to change. David in the psalms often asks God, “*why?*” or “*God, how long will you let this go on?*” David begins Psalm 13 with 4 hard hitting questions to God.

1. *How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?*
2. *How long will you hide your face from me?*
3. *How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart?*
4. *How long will my enemies triumph over me?*

Some of you have been there and asked God why this situation continues. Why don’t you do something about it God? Why don’t you fix it?

Jesus asked one of the most well known questions out of a sense of pain and alienation from His Father when he was dying on the cross and he yelled out, “**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**”

Today’s question is uttered by the apostle Paul and it comes out of feelings of extreme frustration. Prior to this question, Paul has been expressing how frustrated he is with his own personal struggle with sin in his life. He says there are things I know I shouldn’t do and in a very real sense I believe I don’t want to do them – but before I know it – I’ve gone ahead and done them.

In addition, there’s a whole other group of behaviors that I know I should be doing but I don’t do those things. I like how this frustration is translated in The Message.

*“But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can’t keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don’t have what it takes. I can will it, but I can’t do it. I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don’t result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time. It happens so regularly that it’s predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God’s commands, but it’s pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. I’ve tried everything and nothing helps. I’m at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? **Isn’t that the real question?**” (Romans 7:17-24)*

I would imagine for anyone here who wants to do what’s right and pleasing to God – you’ve been there. You’ve shared Paul’s frustrations with your seeming inability to conquer sin in your life.

The answer Paul gives to this all important question is the single greatest key to living a successful Christian life. And his answer, may be one of the greatest hope filled passages in the entire Bible. Follow along as I read Paul’s answer to his own question.

Romans 7:25-8:9 (NIV) *Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. 7 The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

9 You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you.

Let me summarize this whole section with just 3 words: **God's Empowering Grace**.

Most of you are probably vaguely familiar with what grace is in reference to God and salvation.

Mercy: when God doesn't give you what you deserve.

Grace: When God gives you what you don't deserve.

Most of us are familiar with this concept of grace as it relates to salvation. Because of our many sins we deserve to be separated from God for all of eternity. But God, out of His amazing love, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to enter our planet and pay the penalty for everyone of our sins. And then the resurrected Jesus offers everyone of us the forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with our Heaven Father. That's called saving grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV) *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*

These verse point out a powerful reality. You can't earn your salvation. You can't do enough good deeds to earn God's love. God loved you before you committed your first sin and He's continued to love you as you've piled up sins. He loves you right now, regardless as to how you've lived your life and without regards as to how you've treated Him. But our sins cut us off from a relationship with God and so out of His great love He offered us a restored relationship with Himself through acceptance of Jesus Christ. This was the topic of last Sunday's sermon which can be accessed via the church's website.

But God doesn't just stop with giving you His grace to save you. He also gives you His indwelling presence to empower you to live the life God's called you to live day after day. And that's the secret that Paul discovered, that freed him from a life of continual frustration from sinning. Once he surrendered his strong will to God's control and let God begin to live in and through him, everything changed. Then and only then he began to discover freedom from enslaving sin and defeat. He began to daily focus his mind and heart on God and the Spirit directed His steps and filled him with an inexpressible and glorious joy, a peace that is beyond comprehension, a love that transcends race and socio-economic barriers, and he was filled with an ever increasing drive to know Jesus

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (NIV) *For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and his **grace** to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the **grace** of God that was with me.*

Paul says that it's God's grace working in and through him that's made him a changed man.

And while it seemed like he was working really hard to change, the reality is that he was working in conjunction with the grace of God working in and through him to change him.

Paul also talked about the motivating factor of living every day in God's grace in Titus 2:11-14

Titus 2:11-14 (NIV) *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.*

It's God's empowering grace and listening to it and responding to it, which motivates us to live differently.

Several years ago, **Kyle Idelman**, the teaching pastor at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, was out speaking about his very popular video series, Not a Fan. The series is a challenge to consider whether you're a Christian fan sitting in the stands cheering others in their Christian walk, or are whether you're a true follower of Jesus Christ, down on the field, giving it all we've got for the cause of Christ. After Kyle was done speaking, he was down on the floor shaking hands when a person came up to him and handed him a slip of paper with merely a Scripture verse written on it. He thanked the individual for it and tucked it into his pocket. Later in the evening, he reached into his pocket to get a pen and discovered this crumpled up piece of paper. So, he got out his Bible and looked it up and when he read the verse it sent him on a spiritual journey which prompted him to write a whole other video series entitled Grace is Greater.

The verse he read was: **Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)** *See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. That's my desire as well.* That none of us fall short of the empowering grace of God in our lives. My experience has been that most Christians realize we're not saved by our works but by God's grace and yet they still continue to live as if their salvation still depends upon performing well for God. And so they continue to live their Christian life working really hard to try to be a "good" follower of Jesus Christ and hope in the end that it's enough. That approach might look good but it's so different then how God designed you to live.

The key to living a victorious Christian life is by not just knowing about God's empowering grace but by actually living in it daily. Realizing that you can't live this life by your own strength but God has a full storehouse of grace that He is eager to give to you if you just come and ask for it daily. I want to lose this sermon this morning by reading the opposite end of the spectrum from where we started. We started with Paul's question that arose from frustrated living. He said: *"Who will rescue me from this frustrating life of sin?"*

The resounding and immediate answer is God and His empowering grace. And throughout all of chapter 8, Paul talks about how God's empowering grace has transformed his whole life. And it culminates as he closes this chapter with another question: "What then shall we say in response to this? If God is for us who can be against us?" Please follow along and when we get to his climactic conclusion I'll invite you to join in reading with me.

Romans 8:31-39 (NIV) *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."*

Please join me in reading this great section of Scripture: *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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If you could ask God 3 questions what would they be?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What personal question did Paul ask in our text this morning?

What personal question did Paul ask in our text this morning?

Why was this question so important to Paul?

Why was this question so important to Paul?

What’s the answer to Paul’s question?

What’s the answer to Paul’s question?

Mercy: _____

Mercy: _____

Grace: _____

Grace: _____

Two types of grace:

Two types of grace:

1. S _____ grace
2. E _____ grace

1. S _____ grace
2. E _____ grace

Which type of grace is referred to in Ephesians 2:8-9?

Which type of grace is referred to in Ephesians 2:8-9?

What does God’s grace do in our lives according to Titus 2:11-14

What does God’s grace do in our lives according to Titus 2:11-14

What difference does God’s grace make in your life?

What difference does God’s grace make in your life?

How will you live differently in light of today’s message?

How will you live differently in light of today’s message?