

God's Grace ~ Part 3

"Perhaps there is no word in the Bible more precious than Grace."

~ Rick Countryman, Senior Pastor, Big Valley Community Church
Modesto, Ca.

How Do We Appropriate God's Grace ~ Part A

What do we do when we can't fix a complex or even an unfixable problem? What do we do when we can't solve an unsolvable situation? What do we do when we can't change an unchangeable circumstance? What do we do when we can't control something that hurts us deeply in our lives? How do we repair a damaged relationship with a loved one who is no longer living? How do we live with ourselves when we have broken our sobriety? We throw ourselves on the sustaining grace of God.

How do we appropriate God's grace – His power - to enable us to respond to the various circumstances and challenges that constantly come to us? Perhaps the idea of appropriating the grace of God is a new thought to you, and you're not quite sure what I mean. The basic meaning of the word is "to take possession of," and that is what we do when we appropriate God's grace. We take possession of the divine strength He has made available to us in Yeshua. To use an analogy, we draw on an inexhaustible bank account of God's grace. His "checks" never bounce.

Now there are times when the Ruach works in a sovereign way in our lives, apart from any appropriating activity on our part, but more often He expects us to act to appropriate His grace. To this end, God has provided four principal means of appropriating His grace: prayer, His Word, submission to His providential workings in our lives, and the ministry of others. In order to keep the posts on this topic of "How to Appropriate God's Grace" at a reasonable length, I will address each principal individually.

We Go to the Throne of Grace

The first avenue of appropriating God's grace is simply to ask for it in prayer. When all else fails, turn to God for help. In Hebrews 4:15-16, we are invited, or more accurately, we are encouraged to go to God in prayer asking for the grace we need. The passage says, ***"For we do not have a high priest [referring to Yeshua] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time."*** (HCSB – emphasis added)

In Hebrews 4:16, we see, not a throne of wrath as some would have us believe, nor even a throne of infinite majesty and holiness, but a throne of grace. We need to remember that it was God Himself who presented Yeshua as the atonement for our sins, as the One who satisfied the justice of God and by that satisfaction turned aside God's wrath from us. And because of Yeshua's atoning sacrifice, God's throne is no longer a throne of judgment and wrath for us, but it is now a throne of grace.

As we approach the throne of grace, we find that Yeshua, our Great High Priest, has gone before us and is, even as we come, already interceding for us. ***"But because He lives forever, His position as cohen does not pass on to someone else; and consequently, He is totally able to deliver those who approach God through Him; since He is alive forever and thus***

forever able to intercede on their behalf." (Hebrews 7:24-25). Yeshua can sympathize with our weaknesses because He ***"has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin."***

We are encouraged to come to the throne of grace where we have a sympathetic High Priest already interceding for us, ***"so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time."***(Hebrews 4:16). We often use mercy and grace, as referred to God, interchangeably as synonyms, and some Bible commentators understand their use that way in this passage. Though the two words are very close in their meaning, they are usually distinguished as follows: God's goodness exercised toward the unworthy, is called *grace*; toward the suffering, it is called *mercy*. I understand the term grace in Hebrews 4:16 to mean that particular expression of grace we have been considering in this series: divine enabling through the help of the Ruach HaKodesh.

Thus, we approach the throne of grace needing first mercy, because we come as ones in misery or distress. God in His mercy then gives us grace - His divine enabling through His Ruach - to help us in our time of need. We are thus enabled to cope with whatever adversity, trial, or dilemma we face in a godly manner.

So, the first thing we need to do to appropriate God's grace is to cry out for God's help through prayer. As long as we pretend to be self-sufficient, we short-circuit God's power in our lives. We need to humble ourselves and admit our inadequacy and say, "God, I can't handle this!" We may not be able to handle it, but His Word says, ***"The grace He gives is greater, which is why it says, 'God opposes the arrogant, but to the humble he gives grace.' Therefore, submit to God. Moreover, take a stand against the Adversary, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and He will come close to you."*** (James 4:6-8a)

In my next post, I will be covering the Festival of Sukkot and will return to this series on God's grace following that.