

Empowering Grace Pt 5

2 Peter 3:14 – 18

Peter has been talking to us about God's empowering grace. Through His grace we are empowered to live in ways that show His mercy and His love. His empowering grace will lead us live with Him in glory for eternity. To obtain the final reward, believers must live a Godly life and resist the sexual permissiveness of false teachers.

1. Concerning Diligence.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.

Peter feels a closeness with his readers. So much so that he calls them "beloved" twice in this section. They aren't just faceless people "out there", they are part of the body of Christ and a part that Peter had to learn to love. At first, Peter considered himself an Apostle to the Jews. But God, heard the prayers of Cornelius, a Gentile, and prepared Peter to share the good news with Him.

Acts 10:9-16

The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. 10 And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance 11 and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. 12 In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." 15 And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common."

God then takes him to share the Good News with Cornelius and not only does he come to Christ, but all the other uncircumcised Gentiles that were with him believed and received the Holy Spirit.

God made it clear that the He was expanding Peter's call to include the Gentiles.

Whereas before he wouldn't have had anything to do with them, now he holds them dear because God loves them.

Referring to the previous section on the return of Christ, he urges them to live with the expectation of His return and live lives that reflect the grace that they have found in Jesus.

2. Concerning the Distortion of Paul's teaching.

One thing that will help us understand what Peter is talking about is that he is aware of the things that Paul has written about to these same churches.

Rom 2:3-4

3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do

you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Rom 8:1-9

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. 7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you.

Paul had previously written to these same churches and Peter was aware of his teaching. He was also aware that the Gnostics were twisting his words to separate the flesh from the spirit. They presumed upon God that His forgiveness gave them license to indulge the flesh.

15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters.

Gal 5:1-6

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

16 There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

2 Cor 3:5-11

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 7 Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? 9 For if there was glory in the

ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. 10 Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. 11 For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory.

Have you ever read Paul's teachings? He has run-on sentences that go on forever and he writes in ways that seem to contradict themselves in the same sentence. Paul is trying to separate Grace from the Law, but it really takes concentration to understand what he is saying. The Law was there to point out the sin of a lawless people. Through it, God was glorified. Jesus fulfilled the law and brought it to its' conclusion and then made a new covenant with His people which was salvation through faith, or grace. Now we are saved through faith in Christ alone. Does that mean that since the Law was brought to its' conclusion that now lawlessness is OK? Of course not. It just means that the new covenant of His blood now becomes a matter of the heart and not just of rules and regulations.

Here Peter ascribes to Paul's teaching the same level of authority as he does to the writings of the Old Testament. He considers them to be part of the Scriptures.

3. Concerning Proper Response to Paul's Teaching.

17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

You have heard the truth from Paul and now from me. We were both called by Jesus to be His Apostles. Therefore, know the authority that is behind our words and don't be swayed by the words of those who are newcomers to the scene and want to distort what you know to be true. Don't let that affect your stability. Instead, be empowered by His grace to live lives that are true to the witness of Jesus Christ and His Apostles.

Conclusion

His Grace means that we have access to a relationship with God that began with Jesus' sacrifice on the Cross and is continued and empowered through the ongoing work of His Holy Spirit.

We don't have lists of do's and don'ts. We don't have boxes to check off to say that we've done our duty.

We do have His Grace that causes us to measure everything that we think, do, and say against His sacrificial love.

Glorify Him through your works, words, deeds, and actions. And may those only increase as we get closer to His Second Coming.