

NEW LIFE FREEDOM

Lesson 15



We continue to take strong steps toward choosing to live in freedom and obedience to God in our daily interactions. It's getting easier to spot the things that used to trip us up and cause us to act on impulse instead of careful thought. The old ways are starting to look less appealing and we're recognizing the Holy Spirit's voice when we need to make decisions. Forgiving doesn't seem as impossible as it once did. We need to remember, though, what got us to this place: God's grace, not our own efforts.

Grace has been described as God's undeserved favor. It doesn't mean that He excuses or ignores our sins, He pays for them through Jesus. Grace depends on God's character, not our conduct. See how Paul explains it in Ephesians 2:4-7: "But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Jesus from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) For He raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of His incredible wealth of grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all He has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus."

We build barriers to God's love when we hold on to the idea that we're earning His grace. Paul writes in 2 Timothy 1:9, "He saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time." Remember, following the rules isn't what saves us. It comes from our faith in Jesus as the One who covers our failures. He changes our hearts so we want to do what He says. The changes we're making in how we live now come from faith. What used to seem impossible is now not only possible but becomes our focus and goal.

Obedience allows us to live in freedom from our damage. He gives us a new identity that doesn't come from what others say or what we may have said about ourselves. Romans 5:2 shows us a beautiful picture of who we are now. "Because of our faith, Christ has brought us into this place of undeserved privilege where we now stand, and we confidently and joyfully look forward to sharing God's glory."

He also gives us a different perspective on the other people in our lives, especially those that are hard to love. We're battling our human tendencies when we choose to forgive, so we need the reminder Paul gives in Colossians 3:13. "Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others." Making allowance just means we understand that sin is the default mode in human life. That doesn't justify the offence, but we leave it to God to sort out each person's accountability. Other people will be affected by the difference they see in our lives. God gives us the power to move forward instead of living in the past. We can show them that kind of change is available to them too.

SCRIPTURES FOR FURTHER READING:

Ephesians 2:4-7, 2 Timothy 1:9, Philippians 3:9, Romans 5:2, Colossians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Colossians 1:6



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