

Bible is God's Word 5

We Have Jesus: Ask for Grace and Mercy
(preached 11/7/21)

Please turn to *Hebrews 4:14*

TWO WEEKS AGO: We need the Holy Spirit!

- When Jesus ascended to Heaven He didn't leave us alone! WE'RE NOT ON OUR OWN!
- He sent the Holy Spirit Who is our Advocate, Counselor, Teacher & Comforter.
- Jesus said the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to teach us the Truth, to bring everything Jesus said to our minds, and to declare what belongs to Jesus to us and through us.
- We can only understand and live out what's written in the Bible when He is our Teacher, sitting next to us and opening our minds to get it.
- Unbelievers cannot understand the Scriptures no matter how smart or poetic they are, because they don't have God's Spirit in them.
- When we're truly following God's Spirit we'll have good doctrine AND good fruit...we're less likely to be condescending know it all's and speak His truth with love.
- Jesus has never lost a battle, argument, or anything! If He sent a plan or intention in motion, it came about exactly the way He wanted! Nothing comes along to throw a monkey wrench into Jesus' plans.
- The same Jesus, 100% victorious Jesus, lives in us in the form the HS!

LAST WEEK: Hermeneutics of Interpretation.

- **Literal:** whenever possible, take the words of the Bible literally.
- **Allegorical/Symbolic:** when we see similes and metaphors in the Bible, we know to take an allegorical approach and to apply a symbol. Ex: Christians are called "sheep" even though we aren't literal sheep.
- **Historical/Cultural:** We must do some digging into both the time period and culture of when a Biblical book was written to understand what the author is referring to. Ex: Parables were a common method of Rabbinical teaching in 1st century Israel.
- **Moral:** we must read the Bible with the moral aspects of God's Law as our basis, even if they seem "outdated." We cannot insert modern day morals and values into Scripture.
- **Contextual:** to understand a chapter in the Bible we must read the entire chapter. We cannot take one single verse and build a belief from it.
- **Inspired/Biblical:** whenever possible, use the Bible to interpret the Bible.
- **Heavenly Plan:** read the Scripture according to God's overall plan: Kingdom Come!

TODAY we wrap up this sermon series as we complete the steps to our SANCTIFICATION. In the beginning of this same series we talked about the Sword of God's Word helping us in the first 3 steps of our Sanctification which are:

- 1) **Separation**: when the Word of God is read aloud, it “stabs” us revealing false beliefs, wrong thinking, and sinful behaviors we’re living, holding them in stark contrast to the absolute and transcendent truth of God. It separates the true doctrine of God from the false “leaven” of the world and brings us to an important crossroads...***will we mix the two back together or go to step 2:***
- 2) **Repentance**: we cast off the former belief, thinking, and behavior acknowledging it as wrong, sin, and false. We embrace what the Bible says as truth.
- 3) **Lifestyle Change**: we no longer live and speak like we used to. We’re in the lifelong process of casting off the old worldly self, the flesh, and putting on the Christ self.

HEBREWS 12 REVIEW. *Today I want to add a step to this process* and let’s begin by going to Hebrews 4, where we began this journey several weeks ago.

Hebrews 4:12-13 (ESV)

¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- In verse 12 we saw that the spoken Word of God is what begins Sanctification: it’s a sharp sword that stabs and separates!
- Verse 13 says NOTHING is hidden from the sight of God, but we’re completely exposed and must give account to Him! Ouch!

Does this mean we’re in trouble?! I received several private messages from people during this sermon series who, after hearing me preach, got worried about their standing with God. If that’s you, keep listening.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (ESV)

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Verse 14: We’ve just reviewed 2 verses, verses 12-13, that seem like “ouch!” verses that make it seem like we’re in trouble, but now look at verse 14: **we have Jesus.**

ROYAL HIGH PRIEST. He's specifically referred to here in His role is the Great High Priest and the job of the HP is to make blood atonement for sins for an entire nation. Hold up! The "regular" priest helped individuals pay their sin debts as I've explained to you in the past, but the High Priest operated on a greater level—***He was the only one who could enter the presence of God and speak with him.***

KILL GOAT OFFERING. He would kill the goat offering and sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant, directly below the presence of God. The names of the 12 tribes of Israel were written on both his shoulders and breastplate, and he would then kneel down and plead with God to forgive the entire nation of Israel.

He would boldly approach the throne of grace and ask for grace and mercy for his people. God would look down from His lofty position at the top of the Ark and instead of judging His people by their sins, He judged them according to the blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat. Was the goat pure, unblemished, and a sacrifice worthy of God? If yes, He forgave and the High Priest would emerge from the Temple to share these glad tidings of great joy! The people would celebrate because their sins were cleansed!

Jesus is one giant step above the human high priest—He is both Priest and Blood Sacrifice. After He ascended to Heaven 2000 years ago He boldly approached His Father God Who sits on the throne in Heaven, high and lifted up. He sprinkled His OWN blood upon the Heavenly Mercy Seat, then knelt down and plead on behalf of ANYONE who receives Him as Lord and Savior. The names of everyone who receives Him as Lord and Savior are written on His chest.

FATHER JUDGES BY BLOOD. From His lofty throne of Grace, Father God looks down and judges us...by the Blood of Jesus. Was Jesus a worthy sacrifice? Was He without any imperfections and blemishes? Was He completely without sin, iniquity, and trespass? Is yes, then Father God absolves/forgives all sin for those who believe in His Son!

Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Then hear me loud and clear: **YOU MUST APPROACH YOUR PERSONAL SANCTIFICATION FROM THIS FOUNDATION!**

NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD OF JESUS! It's not the shedding of your own blood that Saved you or Saves you now. Stop beating yourself up. If you've been interpreting my sermons as condemnation, you're incorrect. Some Christians still live as though God is either punishing them now or will punish them in the afterlife for their sins.

Punishment is the shedding of blood, whether literal or symbolic, and it's sole purpose is to balance the scales of justice.

GOD IS HOLY. In our relationship with Father God, He was the One demanding justice and rightfully so—He’s God and completely Holy! Holy! Holy! **JESUS GAVE FATHER COMPLETELY AND ETERNAL JUSTICE ON THE CROSS FOR ANYONE WHO KNOWS HIM as SAVIOR.**

NO PUNISHMENT. I ask you again: is Christ your Lord? Have you received Him into yourself for the forgiveness of sins and adoption into the family of God? If yes, *then the path you walk to be Sanctified won’t involve punishment now or in the hereafter.*

Correction, rebuke, and discipline yes. “So what’s the difference, Pastor Scott?”

- ***Punishment seeks only justice.*** It’s being brought before the Judge and condemned according to the violation of the Law to balance the scales. The first loyalty of the Judge is the State, not the person standing before them.
- ***Discipline seeks Godly holiness*** and comes from a Father Who loves and prioritizes the character and destiny of His son & daughter standing before them. There’s no anger, wrath, or disappointment—only loving guidance from a divine Dad Who will dedicate His time and resources to help His kid.

NOT BARRED. If this sermon series has stabbed you and revealed false beliefs, wrong thinking, or sins in your life then you won’t be barred from entrance into God’s Kingdom *if you know Christ as your Savior.* What you’re experiencing is the “cutting” process of separation of God’s Biblical truth vs. falsehoods we’ve believed and lived.

NOT COUNTED AGAINST YOU. These things aren’t being counted against you being God’s son and a citizen in His Kingdom to come. Remember: Jesus Himself is up there right now and YOUR name is written on His heart as He pleads with Father to forgive all those who believe in Him. Father sees your name written on the chest of His Son and declares “all sins forgiven!”

Verse 15: Jesus was here for 32 years in a human body—He gets it. He understands our temptations and weaknesses! He sympathizes with our struggles, all of them! This strange verse says every temptation that can be experienced was thrown at First Coming Jesus and because He was also God in the flesh, He resisted all of them.

FALLEN INTO PIT. That’s the Guy we need helping us. When people feel like they’ve fallen into a pit they often say they want someone to sympathize with them...I get it and agree! But sooner or later I also want the same guy to throw me a rope and PULL ME OUT! I don’t need someone trapped in the same pit as me who merely “gets it”... I need someone who will help me be free. This is Jesus!

But how? What does being free look like? We finally realize we're in the pit of our own sins and its trapped us, limited us, and holds us prisoner. We cannot climb or claw our way out, we've tried. Self-effort has done nothing for us.

Sanctification requires the Holy Spirit—the Supernatural power of God.

We cannot overcome our own sins. We couldn't do it for our Salvation, and we can't do it for our Sanctification.

So what do we do? We have the answer in verse 16:

¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

WE CAN APPROACH. All of whom believe in Jesus are His priests and because of Him we can now approach God Who sits on His throne. ***Look at the label given to the throne:*** judgment? Wrath? Justice?

The throne of judgment/wrath/justice does exist! At the very end of all time, God will sit on a White Throne of judgment, wrath, and justice to mete out the same for all those who never believed in His Son Jesus, recorded in *Revelation 20:11*.

Yet that isn't the one He's sitting on when you and I approach Him to ask for help...He's sitting on a throne called grace. Translations for the word "grace" are legion: ***but every one of them points to God being in a really good mood toward the person kneeling before Him.***

DONE SOMETHING WRONG? Have you ever had to go before an authority figure after doing something wrong? Aren't they normally angry or at least annoyed? Whether a parent, teacher, judge, boss, pastor, spouse, or whoever they're aware of what we did wrong and are ready to mete out some form of justice. Our wrongdoing has also put them in a mood, usually not good.

FATHER FEELS GOOD. Yet when we mess up and approach Father, He's feeling really good toward us. He didn't like nor approve of what we did, but it didn't cause Him to get mad or feel annoyed. It didn't dampen His day in any way. He remains full of peace, love, and joy despite our transgressions AND even better: He's feeling generous toward us. Really really generous.

He wants to use His power and resources to help us. He wants us to ask for them.

KNEEL AND ASK. So now we kneel before Him and ask Him to help us overcome our flesh and move forward to becoming more like Him. **Verse 16** tells us exactly what to do: to ask for grace and mercy.

UNEARNED FAVOR. Further translations of Grace, the first thing we're asking for, is "favor" that we haven't earned.

REWARD. Don't we normally get rewarded for successful efforts? That we understand. We do something good for someone we love during a time of need and we earn their respect, love, and appreciation. Perhaps they return the favor later.

ENEMY. What happens, however, when someone we consider an enemy does something nice for us? Aren't we flabbergasted? Grace. What happens when we violate some rule or law and, when we appear before the appropriate authority figure, they bless us? We're late for work for the umpteenth time and just know the ax is going to fall...yet when we finally get there, bossman gives us a Starbucks instead of a finger wagging...grace.

MESSING UP BEFORE GOD. When God's Word does its *Hebrews 4:12-13* job and exposes our sins and faults, we expect the ultimate Authority Figure of God to be angry and mete out justice in response to our wrong doing. Instead, when we finally come to Him, He's in a good mood. He's smiling, at peace, full of joy and HAPPY to see us. As we kneel down and bow our heads to Him, He wants to know what He can do to help us.

So it's time to start asking for mercy and grace. "Just being honest" with God and people isn't enough. We've come to the throne with our wrong doings exposed to Him, our desire is to turn from them and live the way He wants us to. ***Yet we don't have the self-control, strength, and willpower to do so.*** So now we ask Him to grant us supernatural favor we don't deserve and haven't earned.

PRAYER "FORBIDDEN" PRAYER? I recently prayed a prayer I wasn't sure I should or could...but went ahead and did it anyway. Reason being, there's some other verses I'm well aware of and have memorized from the Book of Galatians and let me quote them to you now:

Galatians 6:7-8 (ESV)

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

GARDEN. We are a spiritual garden and we plant seeds in it all the time. If we follow the desires of our flesh we plant seeds which grow up into a crop that we "harvest" or "eat" later and said crop has a corrupting effect. If I watch gory, violent movies I'm planting seeds in the garden of my soul. That doesn't mean I become a serial killer later, but it might mean I'm more angry, less patient, and less loving in general.

GOOD SEED. If we plant the seeds of God like praying, Bible reading, listening to sermons, worship, acts of obedience, etc., we reap a beneficial spiritual harvest that brings peace, joy, and love.

EAT THE CROP. In the process of my own Sanctification, I saw the bad seeds I'd sown into my garden and the bad harvest that had grown up. If things are just as they are, I have no choice but to eat the current harvest AND that which is to come from seeds I'd planted still waiting to sprout. Why? Because that's what I deserve. I planted those seeds; not the devil or some human adversary. The crop grew because of my words, beliefs, and actions...and now I have to eat it.

Unless God has mercy and grants me favor.

Unless the most powerful and loving Being ever says He'll help me.

So I approached God and asked: *“will You rip out the weeds I've grown in my garden so I don't have to eat them and will you also dig up all the bad seed?”*

In my decades of being a Christian I'd never asked this. Please understand there was no sense of entitlement whatsoever in my prayer, which brings us to MERCY. As a matter of fact, when I came to Him I was grieving over my own sins and the affect they had on others...not just me. **I APPROACHED HIM BEGGING FOR MERCY BECAUSE I KNEW I DESERVED PUNISHMENT.** I asked for mercy because I knew I deserved to eat the bad crop I'd planted and reap corruption.

Someone who feels entitled and someone who doesn't can ask for special favor, Grace.

But only a person who has humbled themselves will ask for mercy.

GODLY COMPASSION. The translation of mercy is Godly compassion in a time when we've done wrong. In other words, we hope when we approach the authority figure after we've wronged them/done wrong in general that they'll be compassionate and merciful vs. angry and desiring to punish.

Thus when I prayed my prayer I approached God asking for mercy—I've done wrong Lord, please have compassion!

Then I asked for Grace: will you tear out the flesh harvest so I don't have to eat it? Will you rip out the bad seed I planted oh God??

And you know what? He did. I couldn't believe it. It just sort of happened and I could feel it inside. Things I'd struggled with for months and years, a perpetual cycle of sowing and reaping, gone. God cleared the weeds and seeds from my internal garden, then we began to plant the seed of the Word of God together in me.

WEEDS CHOKE. It's not that we weren't doing that before, but if weeds have taken over your Garden then even if you throw the best seed down, the weeds will choke it out...Jesus said that in the Parable of the Sower.

SANCTIFICATION HELPS CLEAR OUT THE WEEDS.

WE can ask GOD to DO that.

We're not on our own.

Psalm 46:1-3 (ESV)

¹ God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

Isaiah 41:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Exodus 15:2 (ESV)

² The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

Psalm 9:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ The LORD is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

¹⁰ And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV)

¹ But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

³ For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you.