

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ 9-2-18

To Adult Teachers:

September 2 we will study John 6:36-47. Discussion questions are:

1. How have you seen people “drawn to Christ” by the Father? (6:44)
 - a. What events in life might God use to open someone’s heart to Christ like he did to Lydia in Acts 16:14?
 - b. In the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) what method does the father use to open the son’s heart?
 - i. What is the significance of this statement: “Repentance didn't bring the father's arms. The father's arms brought repentance!”
 - ii. Where does grace take place in the story of the Prodigal Son?
2. What is the connection between baptism and grace in Romans 6:3-4?
3. Is 6:39 a comment on the power of Jesus to resurrect the dead or a comment on the inability of a believer to quit believing? (Note the reference to resurrection power in vs. 39, 40, 44, 54)
4. How does grace liberate one from...
 - a. Thinking you are unlovable (Dt. 7:7-8a)
 - b. Pride
 - c. Religious accomplishment
 - d. Fear
5. How does this promise make you feel: "The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out."
6. How does this promise make you feel: "I shall lose none of all that he has given me...."

Sermon: *Grace, Who Needs It?*

John 6:36-47

Christianity is the only religion that teaches you must become like a little child in order to progress. All other religions suggest you must discover your power and become better than you were before in order to receive blessing.

Here is today’s message in a nutshell: You can't make yourself a Christian. A Christian is a Christian by the sheer grace of God. Again this is what sets Christianity apart from other religions. You investigate Buddhism and it says, "You can make yourself a Buddhist and here's how. You investigate Islam and it says, "You can make yourself a Muslim and here's how." You investigate Humanism and it says, "You can make yourself a Humanist and here's how." You investigate Christ and what does he say? "You don't believe in me and that is not surprising because you can't become a follower of me unless the Father draws you." His message is, "You are what you are by the grace of God. There is nothing you can take credit for if you are a Christian." Pride and superiority have no place in you. Paul puts it this way in Colossians 1:6, "The gospel

is bearing fruit in you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in all its truth."

Let me pause a moment and make sure you understand the grace of God in all its truth. Perhaps the clearest picture of receiving the grace of God is in Romans 6. There Paul defines grace as the gospel and he defines the gospel as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Then, in vs. 3-4, he says the way you indicate you understand the grace of God is by reenacting what Jesus did in the greatest act of grace the world has ever seen. Listen to Paul's words in Romans 6:3-4, "...don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Those 2 verses clearly teach that the way you reenact the great moment of grace is through the process of baptism. Did you hear him say that baptism is like crucifixion, like burial, and like resurrection? So what happens when a person is baptized? What happens is a person says through being baptized, "I understand the grace of God and I am grateful for it. I am so grateful I want to die with Christ, be buried with Christ, and be raised with Christ. As a result of grace when I rise out of that watery grave I will walk a new life for him."

Jesus has 3 practical things to tell us about the grace of God. He says:

1. The grace of God is necessary.
2. The grace of God is lasting.
3. The grace of God is liberating.

THE GRACE OF GOD IS NECESSARY

John 6: 44 - "No man comes to me unless the Father draws him."

We have traditionally not dealt much with the idea of God drawing us. It is taught in places like Acts 16:14 where the text says, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." (Acts 16:14) The longer I deal with lost people the more I am convinced there are a limited number of times in a person's life when that person is open to the call of God on his life. Typically those times are moments when a person is going through great change in his or her life: You get married. You get divorced. A baby is born. A baby dies. You move to a new place. You get a new job. You lose a job. The doctor says, "You are pregnant." The doctor says, "There is no cure for what you have and your days are numbered." Your accountant says, "You have no choice but to file bankruptcy." You get caught in a sin. You get arrested. Your child starts to school. Your child graduates from school. Those are typically the times when a person is very sensitive to his need for God. Those are the times a person experiences the drawing of the Father.

Isn't that what the story of the Prodigal Son teaches? When the prodigal takes his inheritance and begins to party day and night, is he at all interested in his father? Absolutely not! But when all the money is gone, when friends desert him, when hunger

nags at his stomach he goes home in shame. What you must see if you are ever to understand the heart of God is how the father draws his son. Does he go to the far country and through unwanted intervention compel the son to seek forgiveness? Absolutely not! Does he sit on the porch, arms folded, a scowl on his face as he wags his finger and says, "I told you so!" Absolutely not! When the son comes home, empty handed, ashamed, and hopeless the father leaps to his feet, runs to his son, hugs him, kisses him, and sets in motion a series of events all of which say, "grace, grace, grace." "Put the robe on him, put shoes on him, put the ring on his finger, kill the fatted calf." Do you think the son felt drawn to the father when he was smothered in grace? Absolutely! Repentance didn't bring the father's arms. The father's arms brought repentance! There is an old hymn that says, "Tis not that I did choose thee, for Lord that could not be. This heart would still refuse thee hadst thou not chosen me."

How about your life? Are you tired of sin yet? Have you wasted enough years yet? Have you had enough yet? Are you ready to let the father draw you?

The grace of God is necessary and...

THE GRACE OF GOD IS LASTING

John 6:39 - "And this is the will of him who sent me that I shall lose none of all that he has given me...."

Over the centuries debaters have done such damage to promises like that. Obviously Jesus taught many times in many contexts that he is capable of keeping his promise. The debaters have side tracked us into arguing over this subject by using catch phrases that we are supposed to swear allegiance to. Catch phrases like, "Once saved, always saved." and its ugly sister catch phrase, "Once saved, barely saved." Is there anybody here who does not believe Jesus when he says, "I shall lose none of all that he has given me." If you look at the context Jesus is speaking about his ability to raise believers from the dead. John 6:39-40 - "And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." I know that Jesus warned in John 15:6 - "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." I understand that to mean that a person could choose to give up his salvation. I have a hard time imagining anyone doing such a thing. The promise of security in Christ in John 6 is based on the condition that a person believes in Christ. Jesus does not address the rare exception of a person who stops believing in Christ. Nor does he address at what point in a person's life it could be said he no longer believes. That is where we need to leave up to God the separating of the wheat from the tares. I am content to believe that Jesus shall lose none of all that God has given him and to believe that I am one of those.

Why do you think sheep need shepherds? Because sheep are stupid. If you hire a shepherd and at the end of the day he says, "I kept most of them. Three wandered away

but it's not my fault.", what would you say to the shepherd? "Why do you think I hired you? The sheep are stupid. It's your job to assume total responsibility for them. If 3 wander off it is absolutely your fault." So let me ask you, "Do you think Jesus is competent as a shepherd?" Listen, security in Christ does not cause people to abuse grace. It motivates them to live beautiful, secure lives that draw others to Christ. If you are concerned about the potential problem with teaching that we are secure in Christ, let me ask you a really serious question – have you ever heard of anyone being motivated to become a follower of Christ by someone teaching them they will never be secure in their salvation? How many people have come running down the aisle at church shouting, "I want to be baptized and then feel uncertain about my salvation for the rest of my life! Let me into the baptistery so I can get saved and get started wondering if I have lost my salvation yet."

The grace of God is necessary. The grace of God is lasting and...

THE GRACE OF GOD IS LIBERATING

John 6:37, 40 - "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out...everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life...."

Eternal life is the highest quality of life a person can have. It is liberating life. It is burden-lifting life. The gospel of God's grace can lift any burden. Some of you live under the burden of thinking you are not loveable. In Deuteronomy 7 God clearly says to Israel, "I don't love you because of your outstanding qualities. I love you because I love you." Listen to Deuteronomy 7:7-8a – "The Lord did not set his heart on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! Rather, it was simply that the Lord loves you...." If your wife says to you, "Why do you love me?", try answering this way and see if she smiles: "I love you because you mow the grass evenly." "I love you because you fry okra good." "I love you because you balance the checkbook." That's not what she wants to hear is it? Max Lucado dedicated one of his books to his wife with these words, "If a star fell from the sky each time I think of you, the heavens would be empty." That is the way God loves you. He was thinking about you before you were in your mother's womb. He loves you because he loves you, not because of your goodness or your accomplishments.

Some of you live under the burden of pride. Some of you are very proud that you are more polished than other people, more ambitious than other people, harder working than other people, more successful than other people. You never have any trouble loving yourself. As a matter of fact you are deeply in love with yourself. Listen, if you don't let Jesus take you off your pedestal today, some day life will take you off your pedestal. You say, "I worked hard to get where I am." Yes you have worked hard but you have worked with the resources God gave you. Have you lost sight of that? What if you had been born as an untouchable in India? Would you still be the great success you are? You are what you are by the grace of God alone. Until you see that you are going to become

prouder and prouder and harder and harder until the day that life itself decides to show you that you are not in control of your life.

Whatever your burden is, if you come to Christ it will fall off your back. A ship once sailed the coast of South America. Because of the dense fog the Captain of the ship did not know that they had mistakenly sailed up the Amazon. They had been out of drinking water for 2 days. The men on the ship were dying of thirst. They saw another ship and sent an emergency signal, "We need water. We are dying of thirst." The other ship signaled back, "Let down your bucket." Like that ship we are surrounded by a river of mercy, not a sea of unforgiving salt water. Let down your bucket.

"The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out." The question is, have you come to Christ? That's what the invitation is about. It is your opportunity to come to Christ because you are convinced of the Father's love for you and you are convinced you have not lived a life of gratitude. This is an invitation to those who are grateful for God's grace in giving his son to die for you. Grateful people are willing to come and die with him. That's what baptism is all about. It is you saying, "I repent of my sins. I want to be born again. I want to live a new and grateful life from this day forward."