



Holiness and Grace: Holiness and grace in redemptive history

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Introduction

The interplay of holiness and grace is a profound theme woven throughout redemptive history, revealing the character of God and His dealings with mankind. In Exodus 34:6-7, the Lord proclaims Himself as merciful and gracious, yet also just, underscoring the necessity of holiness in His divine nature. This balance is further exemplified in the New Testament, where Paul declares in Romans 6:14 that believers are not under the law, but under grace, reflecting the transformative power of God's grace that enables a life of holiness. Such grace does not diminish the call to holiness; rather, it empowers and compels the believer to pursue righteousness. Understanding this dynamic invites a deeper appreciation of God's redemptive work and encourages a life that honors His holiness while resting in His abundant grace. Ultimately, this beautiful tension invites us to respond in faith and obedience, recognizing both the seriousness of sin and the sufficiency of God's love.

The relationship between God's grace and our call to holiness reveals the profound depths of His love towards humanity. As 1 Peter 1:15-16 exhorts believers to be holy as He is holy, this divine mandate is not born of legalism but of the grace that redeems us, as noted in Ephesians 2:8-9. The understanding that we are saved by grace alone compels us to live set apart for His glory, reflecting His character in a world that often strays from His ways. This call to holiness is both a privilege and a responsibility, inviting believers to embody the transformative power of the Gospel in their daily lives. In recognizing our identity as children of God, we find the motivation to pursue righteousness and to demonstrate His love to others, thus fulfilling the purpose for which we were created. Such a life not only honors God but also draws others to the hope found in Him.

The Holiness of God Revealed

The holiness of God stands as a pillar of His divine nature, embodying both His absolute separation from sin and His moral perfection. In Isaiah 6:3, the seraphim proclaim, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts," underscoring not only the uniqueness of God but also the inaccessibility of His purity to a sin-ridden world. Similarly, Leviticus 11:44 calls His people to reflect this holiness, declaring, "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy." This imperative reveals



the profound call to live in accordance with God’s character, emphasizing that holiness is not merely an attribute of God but a standard to which His people are summoned. The recognition of God’s holiness fosters a deep reverence and awe, compelling believers to pursue righteousness and to stand in stark contrast to the moral decay surrounding them. In contemplating the holiness of God, one is drawn to the beauty of His perfection and the transformative power it holds for those who seek to walk in His ways.

The holiness of God, as revealed in Scripture, stands as both a beacon of His majesty and a profound reminder of human frailty. In Psalm 30:4, the psalmist invites the faithful to sing praises to the Lord, acknowledging His righteousness and the joy that accompanies His presence. Yet, the stark reality of Isaiah 59:2 unveils the chasm created by sin, a separation that underscores humanity’s desperate need for divine grace. This holiness, unmatched and transcendent, compels a response; it calls individuals to reflect upon their own unworthiness and to seek reconciliation with the Holy One. As believers grasp the weight of God’s purity, they are led to a deeper recognition of their need for Christ, the ultimate mediator who bridges the gap between divine holiness and human sinfulness. Embracing this truth not only heightens one’s appreciation of grace but also cultivates a heart that yearns for holiness in response to the God who is holy.

Grace in the Old Testament

From the very beginning, God’s grace has been a manifest reality in His covenantal dealings with humanity, as seen in the promises made to Abraham, where his faith was counted for righteousness (Gen 15:6). Despite the repeated failures and unfaithfulness of His people, the Lord remained steadfast, revealing His merciful nature as He declared Himself to be “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Exo 34:6). This divine grace is not simply an afterthought but serves as the foundation of God’s relationship with Israel, demonstrating that His love and commitment transcend human shortcomings. The narrative of the Old Testament continually illustrates that grace is woven into the fabric of God’s covenant, inviting His people to return to Him, even when they stray. Through each act of mercy, the Lord reaffirms His desire for restoration, reminding us that His faithfulness endures, illuminating the path toward reconciliation and hope in Him.

In the tapestry of the Old Testament, the figures of Noah and Abraham stand as beacons of grace interwoven with God’s holiness. Noah, described as a righteous man who found grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen 6:8), exemplifies how divine favor can prevail even



amidst a world steeped in corruption. His obedience not only spared his family but also heralded the promise of renewal through the flood, illustrating that grace is not merely a passive gift but an active call to righteousness. Similarly, Abraham, whose faith was counted as righteousness (Rom 4:3), showcases the profound truth that grace invites a response of trust and obedience. Both patriarchs reveal a God who, while just, extends mercy and offers hope, demonstrating that His holiness is never divorced from His redemptive purpose. Through their lives, the narrative of grace unfolds, beckoning believers to understand that God's unfailing love and righteousness are intricately linked in the story of salvation.

The Fulfillment of Grace in Christ

In the New Testament, the person of Jesus Christ stands as the epitome of both holiness and grace, a divine harmony that fulfills the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17). The Word made flesh, He reveals the fullness of God's glory, manifesting grace and truth in a manner that transcends mere adherence to the law (John 1:14). Jesus does not abolish the law but rather brings it to completion, embodying its intent and purpose through His perfect obedience and sacrificial love. In Him, believers find not only the standard of holiness but also the abundant grace that empowers them to live righteously. This profound union invites the faithful into a relationship grounded in both reverence and love, assuring them that through Christ, they are not merely recipients of grace but are called to reflect His holiness in a world in desperate need of redemption. Thus, the fulfillment of grace in Christ becomes the cornerstone of the believer's journey.

In the fullness of time, God manifested His grace through the sacrificial death and glorious resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, as the ultimate means of justification for sinners before a holy God. The Scriptures declare that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:8), revealing the depth of divine love that transcends human understanding. Through His once-for-all offering, as articulated in Hebrews 10:10, believers are sanctified and made righteous, no longer bound by the weight of sin but liberated to walk in newness of life. This profound act not only fulfills the righteous requirements of the Law but also establishes a new covenant of grace, inviting all who believe to partake in the blessings of redemption. In Christ, the perfect union of justice and mercy is realized, affirming that through His atoning work, the believer stands justified, embraced by grace and called to live in the light of His truth.

The Call to Holiness in the New Covenant



In the New Covenant, believers are called to a life of holiness, reflecting the character of God in every aspect of their daily walk. As the Apostle Paul exhorts in 1 Thessalonians 4:7, the call to holiness is not merely a suggestion but a divine mandate, rooted in the very nature of God who has called us unto Himself. This calling compels us to set our affections on things above, as articulated in Colossians 3:1-2, urging us to transcend earthly distractions and to embody the righteousness that Christ has imparted to us. Such a life of holiness serves as both a testimony to the transformative power of the Gospel and an act of worship that glorifies God. Therefore, as we strive to live in accordance with our heavenly calling, we must continually seek the Lord's guidance and grace, endeavoring to reflect His holiness in every thought, word, and deed.

In the New Covenant, believers are called to a life of holiness, made possible by the grace of God. Romans 8:1 reassures us that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, freeing us from the guilt of sin and the fear of judgment. This liberation empowers the faithful to pursue righteousness with confidence, knowing that the Spirit works within to will and to do of His good pleasure, as expressed in Philippians 2:13. The call to holiness is not merely a daunting command but a divine invitation, sustained by the very grace that redeems. Thus, as we strive for sanctification, we do so not in our own strength but through the enabling power of God's Spirit, who transforms our hearts and minds, allowing us to reflect His character in a world longing for hope and truth. The pursuit of holiness becomes a testament to His grace at work within us, inviting others to seek the same.

The Ultimate Hope of Redemption

In the fullness of time, the ultimate hope of redemption reveals itself in the believer's glorious transformation into the image of Christ. As the Apostle John proclaims, "when he shall appear, we shall be like him" (1 John 3:2), this promise encapsulates the culmination of holiness and grace bestowed upon those whom God has called. The divine purpose, anchored in the foreknowledge and predestination of God, assures that all whom He justifies, He will also glorify (Romans 8:30). This eschatological hope serves not as a distant dream, but as a present reality that shapes our lives in this world, urging believers to pursue holiness reflective of their future state. As we anticipate the day of Christ's return, we are called to live in the light of that glorious promise, striving diligently toward the image of our Savior, who is both the source and the embodiment of our hope. Thus, we are reminded that our transformation is not merely a future expectation, but a present journey toward Christlikeness.



In the light of the ultimate hope of redemption, believers are called to a life of righteousness as they eagerly anticipate the glorious restoration of all things. Revelation 21:1-4 presents a vision of a new heaven and a new earth where sorrow and death shall be no more, encapsulating the profound promise of God's final victory over sin and suffering. Likewise, 2 Peter 3:13 reminds the faithful that, in accordance with His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This future hope not only assures us of divine restoration but also compels us to live in accordance with God's holy standards today, as we reflect the light of Christ in a world often shrouded in darkness. Such anticipation instills in us a sense of urgency and purpose, urging our hearts to be steadfast in good works, knowing that our labor is not in vain. Thus, the promise of restoration serves as both a comfort and a call to holiness.

Conclusion

In the divine tapestry of grace and holiness, believers are invited into a transformative journey that reflects the very character of God. Ephesians 1:4 reveals that believers are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, called to be holy and without blame before Him in love. This divine election not only highlights God's sovereign grace but also emphasizes the expectation of holiness as a response to His mercy. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 proclaims, those in Christ are made new creations, signifying a profound change that aligns with God's moral purity. This relationship between holiness and grace is not merely transactional; it is relational, inviting believers to reflect the nature of their Creator through a life marked by righteousness and love. Thus, as one grows in understanding of God's grace, the heart is compelled toward holiness, leading to a life that glorifies Him in every aspect. The journey, rooted in His character, beckons believers to continually seek transformation.

In embracing the truth of God's redemptive work, believers are called to shine forth His glory in a world yearning for hope and restoration. As the light of Christ illuminates their hearts, they are empowered to manifest the fruits of the Spirit, which serve as beacons of love, joy, peace, and goodness amidst darkness (Gal 5:22-23). This divine transformation compels them to let their light so shine before men, that others may see their good works and glorify the Father in heaven (Matt 5:16). Such a reflection of God's character not only testifies to His grace but also invites others into the beauty of redemption. Each act of kindness and each word of truth becomes a testimony of His faithfulness, echoing the call to live as ambassadors of His kingdom. In this sacred endeavor, believers contribute to the unfolding narrative of salvation, fostering a community rooted in the hope and love of Christ.

