

Two Types of Blessings

The faithful Christian widow I sat with had been a devout New Testament Christian almost all her life. I've known very few Christians who were as deeply dedicated as she had been. Well into her eighties, she said something that caught me off guard, "I just hope I've been good enough for God to let me into heaven." Being the brash young preacher that I was, I stated flatly, "Well, let me say, 'You haven't.'" Her shocked look bore no words. I continued, "No one is getting into heaven but by the grace of God." She relaxed, then a slow smile replaced her concern, "Why can't I remember that? I've known that all my life!" We shared a soft chuckle.

Many Christians struggle to process God's truths on the subject of grace. Part of that struggle is that it simply seems too good to be true. Indeed, it does *seem* too good to be true, but it is. God forgives our sins through the blood of His Son on the cross, **not** through our work on earth. Paul reminds us that if we try to be saved by our own works, we actually lose His grace (Galatians 5:4).

Another reason some Christians struggle to process their full understanding of "grace" is that there are two types of blessings. One type of blessing is grace, itself, which we cannot earn (Ephesians 2:8-10). It is a gift which must be **accepted** on God's terms, not ours. Accepted, not earned, such is the very nature of a gift. Salvation itself depends on it.

The other type of blessings are earthly blessings that come from keeping God's word. Close marriages are a blessing from God. He rewards husbands and wives who are faithful and loving, treating each other with grace (forgiveness for the dumb things we all do). One clear example is Proverbs 10:3, "The Lord will not allow the **righteous to hunger**, But He will reject the craving of the wicked." Physical sustenance is a blessing from God's earth, sun and water *to those who are righteous... not to the wicked*. Notice that God, Himself, will see to the needs of the righteous - a physical blessing *earned* by righteousness - not the spiritual blessing of salvation, which comes through God's grace, not our works (back to Ephesians 2:8).

Many, many blessings are the result of our success in doing the right thing (by God's definition, not man's). That is true for hard work, caring for the sick, helping the poor, etc. We get, physical, emotional, and spiritual blessings from personal righteousness. Healthy, loving, cooperative church families come from the righteousness of the members. Godly children come from godly, faithful, spiritual parenting, and so on for a myriad of blessings.

Let us strive to understand *and remember* that the grace of forgiveness is one type of blessing from God, a gift never earned. Other blessings are, indeed, earned by faithful righteousness in loving obedience to God.

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For further study: Psalm 18:20; Psalm 19:11; 2 Chronicles 15:6-8; Matthew 6:1,2