

# Cultivating the Heart: Understanding God's Grace



## Introduction

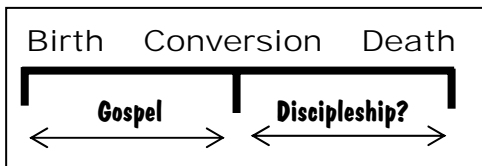
A great challenge in our lives: disappointment  
 1) with others 2) with life 3) with God 4) with yourself  
 One key to persevering in the Christian life and bearing fruit is to come to a better understanding of God's grace.  
 Col. 1:6 Heb. 12:15

### I. What is grace? John 1:17

**Justice**- Getting what we deserve.  
**Mercy**- Not getting what we deserve.  
**Grace**- Getting what we don't deserve.  
 - Frequency in the N.T. 122x  
 "Grace to you" in 18 of the 22 epistles  
 - The essence of the doctrine of grace is that God is for us.

### II. When do we need grace?

What did you need most before you came to Christ?  
 How about now?  
 Galatians 3:3  
 - Why do I always need grace? I will never be acceptable because of my works.  
 - Jack Miller: "Preach the gospel to yourself every day."  
 - Discipline without desire is drudgery.



### III. The problems of legalism

**1. It fosters pride and discouragement in my life**  
 - **a) pride** – because I think that I am better than others because of what I do; or because I compare myself with others whom seem to be less "successful" than I am.  
 - **b) discouragement** – because I fail again and again to live a holy blameless life; or because I compare myself with others who seem to be more "successful" than I am.  
**2. It's impossible to make it by our works**  
 Matthew 5:48; James 2:10

### IV. Two extremes: legalism and license

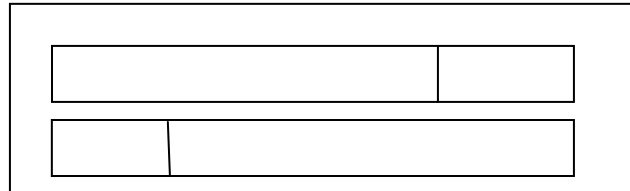


## V. Illustrated in the Parable of the Prodigal Son

<u>The prodigal son</u>	<u>The proper son</u>
Younger	Older
Foolish	"Wise"
Wayward	Obedient
Wasted his inheritance	Saved his inheritance
Left home in rebellion	Stayed home in submission
"My father's not fun"	"My father's not fair"
A picture of the sinners	A picture of the Pharisees
<b>When the prodigal returned</b>	
Pled with the father	The father pled with him
Upset with himself	Upset with his brother and father
"I am not worthy to be called your son"	"I deserve better treatment than this"
Reconciled in the end	Unreconciled in the end
Broken and humbled	Unbroken and proud
Scarred but close	Unscarred but distant
Humble because of his failures	Proud because of his accomplishments
Most aware of his own failures	Most aware of others' failures
Hard on himself	Hard on others
Outside to inside	Inside to outside

### Prodigal Son and You

You tend to be a mixture of both.



<u>Rebellious</u>	<u>Religious</u>
Wayward	Obedient
Failure	Success
Wasted your inheritance	Saved your inheritance
Left God in rebellion	Stayed w/ God in submission
Reconciled in the end	Unreconciled in the end
The part of you you're ashamed of	The part of you you're proud of
Hard on himself	Hard on others
"I'm terrible"	"I'm great"
Mercy	Justice
<b>Need</b>	
Calvary	Sinai
A new understanding of God's mercy	A new understanding of God's righteousness
Psalm 51	Psalm 73
Bathed and healed by His grace	Examined and humbled by His law
Luke 15:7; 1 Timothy 1:15	Is. 64:6; 1 Cor.15:10