



APPNOTES

Date: October 1-5, 2018

Series: The Comparison Trap

Ephesians 2:8-10 “There before the grace of God go I.” Each of us has spoken this phrase at one time or another. But have we meditated upon the magnitude of its meaning? Ephesians 2:8-10 states salvation is a gift. There is nothing physical we can do to earn heaven. God grants us eternal glory through Christ’s crucifixion; the victory over sin is achieved by His resurrection. This passage also reminds us every child of God is rescued for a reason. Each of us have works prepared in advance for us to do - our daily purpose. Such labors are a call to obedience, not an eternal scorekeeper of rights and wrongs. All glory is God’s! It is through God’s grace and forgiveness we are able to forgive, serve, and pray for others. Open your heart to accept God’s forgiveness and accept His grace. In turn, mercy, compassion and understanding will flood every part of your life.

Judges 6:1-14 As I read this passage, I cannot help comparing it to our world today. The Israelites suffered physical oppression at the hands of the Midianites. Today we are victims in a spiritual war. Every day brings new temptation and persecution as Satan roams the Earth trying to destroy any hint of Godliness. He occupies our thoughts and attempts to fill our hearts with fear and hate. He makes us question God’s presence in our lives during trials; His one goal is to separate us from our true Father. But remember, God never abandons His children! Even in the darkest hours of night, He is with us. And as God summoned Gideon to action in the midst of oppression, we too must move forward knowing God is with us. God knows our strengths and weaknesses and calls us to “go in the strength we have”. When we heed his call, He takes care of the rest.

Acts 20:22-24 In this passage, Paul compares following Christ to running a race. He prepares himself at the onset for any obstacles. He overcomes his fear and fixes his eyes toward the finish line. We, too, have a race marked out for us by our Heavenly Father. We will most definitely encounter distractions and hindrances along the way. But as we set out to conquer our unique race, we must prepare ourselves and remain focused on God’s end game. We are not called to run anyone else’s race. Instead of looking around at everybody else, we must fix our eyes on Jesus’ plan for our own lives. This is very difficult a society that encourages us to set our goals to match or outdo others around us. It is so much easier to judge others and fix someone else’s issues. Our individual race is messy, challenging and frightening. But God provides personalized guidance. Remember, our race is about God, not ourselves!

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 Most people spend their lives trying to figure out who they are. They constantly ask themselves, “What is my place in the world?”. Day after day they search for true purpose. This question is answered with the good news of the Gospel. Once we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we become a member of His family. We find our identity in Christ. In this passage, Paul explains that God’s will for our lives is first about character. He expects His children to practice self-control. Paul goes onto say that we are not alone in this battle against temptation. We have been gifted the Holy Spirit as the ultimate helpmate. God holds us accountable for our actions. Sinning separates us from God’s perfect will for our lives. Yet we continue to sabotage true joy for fleeting pleasures. If you question where God wants you to focus and who he wants you to be—grow in purity.

Matthew 14:22-33 Sometimes when we face difficult circumstances, we question God’s presence in our lives. Have we lost our way? Have we done something wrong to deserve such trials? But as we notice in this passage, Jesus sends his disciples into the storm. He calls us to hardship as well. We must face difficult times to become strong and grow in faith. For it is in the eye of the storm where we experience the real power of Christ. When we cannot see through the torrential rain, He opens our eyes. When we cannot hear His voice over the roaring thunder, He whispers in our ears. And when we can no longer swim in the sea of life, He lifts our head above the water!

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