



Stand Firm in God's Grace: Part 2

Introduction:

In **John 10:10**, Jesus said that He came into the world that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly. In the context of **John**, we know this goes beyond the life we are living now and encompasses the abundant and overflowing gift of eternal life. We see heaven in this promise. But what does this abundant overflowing life look like now? We are not talking about the health and wealth gospel. God's abundant life doesn't mean we will be rich, live in a big house, drive the nicest cars, wear the best clothes. It is the abundant life of sheep following the Good Shepherd. This abundant life is seen in **Psalms 23**. It means being led by quiet waters, having refreshment and restoration, being guided in righteousness, protected in the face of our enemies, and having goodness and mercy follow us all our days. Do you want that abundant life? Do you want it growing in your life today, impacting your home, your work, your congregation? This is what God's grace offers. This is what standing firm in God's grace promises us. But how do we stand firm in God's grace? As we learned in our first lesson, to stand firm in God's grace, we must first see how much we need it. Apart from God's grace we are dead in our trespasses and sins, doomed to repeat them endlessly until we die. If you want life and liberty from sin, you need God's grace. But what is next? How can we grow in God's grace, guaranteeing that we will never fall from it?

Jesus took up the theme of abundant life again in **John 10:27-28**. Jesus gives His sheep eternal life. There it is. That's salvation. That's grace. Not only that, but His sheep cannot be snatched out of His hand. That is the protection of His grace. But what do His sheep do? They do not wander wherever they will expecting Him to simply save and protect them. No, Jesus' sheep hear His voice, they know Him, they follow Him. Jesus' sheep listen to His Word. This passage does not say that no matter what you do, you're Jesus' sheep and you'll be saved. What it actually says is when you know Jesus, listen to Jesus, and follow Jesus, you can't be lost. If you want to stand firmly in God's grace, what then must you do? You must listen to God's Word.

Discussion:

I. We meet Jesus in God's Word.

- A. How do you view the Bible? What is this book that God has given us? Is it simply a rule book? Is it a simply a reference book? Is it simply a history? Is it nothing more than a guide to church polity? Does it do nothing more for us than provide the pattern for the worship and work of the local congregation? Do we study it simply so we can know how to dot the Is and cross the Ts, debating with all who disagree? Do we simply reference it to learn to be good enough or try to prove that we are good enough to go to heaven? What is the Bible to you?
- B. Regrettably, I haven't always viewed the Bible in the most positive light. Even as a Christian and a preacher, I have seen the Bible as the rule book to be studied, analyzed, and systemized. Don't get me wrong, I have always believed it was from God. I have always been certain that if I searched the Scriptures I could get eternal life. But what I thought was that if I studied the Scriptures properly, I could attain eternal life for me. Or, at least, I thought I could get close enough to prove I was good enough that God would give me His grace and cover the rest. The problem for me was this. With that mindset, I never seemed to get life from the Word. Oh, I learned how to debate and prove my point. I learned how to lay down the pattern of sound Words. I learned how to dot the Is and cross the Ts. But I spent most of my time bartering with God. "Exactly how far, God, do I have to go to get your grace? How much of Your Word do I have to follow to be good enough to get the grace to cover the rest?" I didn't want to be good. I didn't want to glorify God. I really wanted to follow my own course, but God's Word said I'd go to hell if I did that. So I wanted to know how much of my own path I could still follow. I wanted to know how much of God's path I had to actually do. I was constantly running in a rat race, trying harder and harder to prove I was good enough, but constantly feeling like I was never going to make it no matter how much closer to God's Word I got. Have you ever thought like that? Have you ever felt like that?
- C. This approach to the Word didn't begin with us. In fact, Jesus dealt with this in **John 5:39-40**. The Pharisees searched the Scriptures because they thought they could attain eternal life through their search. The problem was for them and is for us, we cannot attain eternal life. Though God's law is good, it doesn't bring life—it brings death because we don't keep it (**Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:10-11**). The law gives us knowledge of our sinfulness and our need for grace. What good then are the Scriptures? Are we saying that life cannot be found in the Word? Absolutely not. As Jesus said in **John 5:39-40**, the Scriptures bear witness of Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (**John 14:6**). How do we meet Him? Through the Word. How do we get life? Through the Word.

II. God's Word is the truth that leads to life.

- A. All too often, when we view God's Word simply as a rule book to reference to see how to be good enough to go to heaven, we see reading it as nothing more than a homework assignment. We actually don't see reading it as a blessing and a joy. It is a burden. We don't see it as the guide to abundant living. We see it as a hindrance to the life we want to live.
- B. But remember what Jesus said about God's Word in **John 17:17**. While praying to the Father, He said, "Sanctify them in the truth; your Word is truth" (ESV). God's Word is truth, just as Jesus Himself is the truth. God's Word and Jesus are inextricably linked to each other. How can we forget **John 8:32**? "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (ESV). God gave us His Word so we might be set free from our sins. We cannot be set free apart from God's Word.
- C. Jesus explained His relation to God's Word in **John 12:49-50**. Jesus refused to speak on His own authority. Rather, He listened to His Father's Word, His Father's commandments, and that is how He determined what to say, speak, teach, and live. But why? Was it a burden to Him? Was it a chore? No. Jesus wanted life and Jesus knew that the Father's commandments are life. God hasn't given His Word to be a burden or a hindrance to abundant life. God's Word is His gift that leads us down the path of abundant living.

III. God's Word works.

- A. We see the abundant life illustrated in **Psalms 23**. We see the promise of an abundant life in **Galatians 5:22-23**. But we struggle with how to get there. Let's face it. These pictures of abundant living are what we all want. We want to be like that serene sheep in the presence of the Good Shepherd. We want the Spirit's fruit in our lives. Aren't most of our choices made thinking they will bring us peace and joy? We don't make choices thinking, "This will bring me anxiety and despair and that's what I want." Yet, that is exactly where our choices lead us. **Jeremiah 10:23** explains that it is not in us to direct our steps. **Proverbs 14:12** explains our way ends in death. What are we to do if we want abundant life? We must follow God's Word because God's Word actually works.
- B. A long time ago, before Mapquest, Google maps, and GPSs, people drove with atlases in their cars. If they wanted to know how to travel somewhere, they got out a map. They found their destination. They mapped out their course. Then they continually referred to it to make sure they were going the way that worked. They didn't do that because the atlas showed them how to be good enough to get to whatever destination they wanted. They did that because the atlas showed them the way that works. That is what God's Word is for us. We need to listen to God's Word because it actually works. It actually points the right way. We need to read it and constantly get back into it so it will guide us to the abundant life of God's grace.
- C. Consider a good example of this. In **Genesis 6:8**, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. That was good for Noah because God was going to destroy the people of the world for their sinfulness. But Noah found grace. That grace did not mean that Noah was just plucked out of the flood's way. What it means is Noah received God's Word. God's Word was build an ark, gather the animals, store up food (**Genesis 6:13-22**). Noah could view this Word in one of two ways. It could be a hindrance on the fun he wanted to have. Instead of partying, Noah spent his Friday nights building a big boat. Instead of taking weekends off, he gathered food. All these rules and regulations could have been a burden to him. He could have spent his time, as some comedians have suggested, complaining about how hard it was. Or he could see the Word of God for what it was. He could see that Word as life. God wasn't trying to burden Noah to death. He was paving the way to life. When it was all said and done, Noah built that ark, gathered the animals, stored the food and what happened? Noah and his family lived. Some folks today try to tell us it couldn't possibly have happened that way. It would never work like that. Yet, there it is. God's Word worked. God's Word still works. We need to listen to God's Word.
- D. Since God's Word works, it is no wonder we read all manner of warnings not to be turned away from God's Word. In **Galatians 1:6-10**, Paul warns against turning to other gospels. God's Word is the good news, nothing else is. In **Hebrews 13:9**, we are encouraged to be strengthened by God's grace and not led away by diverse and strange teachings. In **I Timothy 1:3-4**, Paul warns against teaching different doctrines and getting caught up in myths and endless genealogies. Then in **I Timothy 6:3-5**, Paul warns against teaching anything other than doctrine that agrees with the sound Word of Jesus Christ. As Jesus explained in **Matthew 7:24-27**, God's Word is the foundation on which an abundant life is built. God's Word works. Everything else will fail in the end.

IV. God's Word is God's guide to get God's grace.

- A. When Paul believed he was speaking to the Ephesian elders for the very last time, he had one commendation for them. He said, "And now I commend you to God and to the Word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified" (**Acts 20:32**, ESV). Why do we need to listen to God's Word? Because God's Word is able to build us up. It can get the job done. God's Word is able to give us the inheritance among the sanctified.

- B. Why do we need to be in God's Word? Because God's Word is God's guide to get God's grace. According to **Psalm 119:105**, God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It can show us the way. According to **Psalm 119:50**, God's promise gives us life. According to **Psalm 119:11**, when we hide this Word in our heart, we can overcome sin. No wonder **Psalm 19:7-10** says God's Word is sweeter than honey and more desirable than gold. Just imagine that. The psalmist is saying if he had a pile of gold in one hand and God's Word in the other, he would take God's Word. Why? Because he knew God's Word is God's guide to God's grace.

Conclusion:

Do you want the abundant life of **John 10:10; Psalm 23; Galatians 5:22-23**? Do you see how much you need God's grace and want to stand firm in God's grace, growing in His blessing? Then listen to God's Word. God's Word works. God's Word is God's guide to get God's grace. You can't live without it. Do you remember when the 5000 abandoned Jesus in **John 6**? He turned to the 12 and asked if they wanted to leave as well. Peter responded, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the Words of eternal life" (**John 6:68**, ESV). We need to face the Bible the same way. Where else can we go? God's Word is the Word of grace. It is the Word of eternal life.

I don't want to simply leave you with a theoretical thought. I want to leave you with an action. If God's Word really is God's guide to God's grace, then you need to be constantly in God's Word so you can have God's grace. For numerous reasons we put off getting in to God's Word. We don't have time. We are too busy. We'll get to it later. We got enough of it on Sunday. We are overwhelmed because there is just so much of it. What it all boils down to as we make excuses is we really don't see how desperately we need God's Word to live today. **Psalm 119:145-148** shows someone who saw that desperate need. Here was someone who wanted to do right, but saw the hopelessness apart from God's grace and salvation. He begged God to save him that he might observe God's testimonies. But he saw how much he needed daily conscious contact with God. He rose before dawn to pray, and hoped in God's Word. Further, he awoke before the watches of the night so that he might meditate on God's Word. Why? Because to him, God's Word is God's guide to God's grace. He needed it. I have one simple action for you based on this lesson. If you want to stand firm in God's grace, makes some plans to be in God's Word. Perhaps today, listening to the Word of God proclaimed in these sermons and classes can suffice. But tomorrow, make plans to get into God's Word and let God's Word get into you. You don't have to plan a lifetime of Bible reading. Don't be overwhelmed by how much of God's Word there is. Simply take some time to connect to God through His Word. Hear your Shepherd's voice and follow Him. Take it one day at a time. Base what you do on what you know. You'll grow as you keep doing that. But on every day that you know you need God's grace, spend time in His Word. If you do, you will stand firm in His grace. After all, God's Word is God's guide to get God's grace.