GALATIANS

Grace = "Enough"

Day 1: Auditioning For Grace

Read : Galatians 2:15-3:9; 1 Samuel 16:6-7; Ephesians 2:1-10

If you've ever been in theater or dance, you know how stressful auditions can be. Of course there are plenty of ways we "audition" for things in life: sports try-outs, competitions, job interviews, even a first date is sort-of like an audition. Maybe walking into a church service for the first time felt like an audition. In those moments, it can feel like everyone is watching, waiting, and judging your every move.

While we might not realize it, we can often get stuck "auditioning" for God's grace. Without realizing it, we can act like God is sitting in the audience with a clipboard scowling at us. The church in Galatia was no different, and they were stuck in the rut of trying to "audition" for God's grace. Paul's letter tells us that we don't need to audition, try-out, compete, or prove our worth to God. Jesus already auditioned in our place. He gave His life for our part in the play, to get us on the team, and ultimately to establish our worth. All we have to do is simply receive it as a gift of grace.

Ask yourself, as you reflect on these: Am I "auditioning" for or receiving His grace?

- **When I fail, do I have to prove I'm still a good person?** - *Are you overcompensating to "make up" after a failure, becoming defensive, or continuing to beat yourself up even after you've apologized?*
- **Do I feel like God is more pleased when I'm productive?** - *Are you feeling guilty for resting, or ranking your days by what you've accomplished?*
- **Do I need approval - or to be seen as loving, dependable, or helpful?** - *Are you agreeing when you're overwhelmed, overextending, feeling guilty for saying "no", assuming you're at fault if someone is upset, or stuck in people pleasing?*
- **Do I feel like God is secretly keeping score?** *When you imagine God with His clipboard again, is He saying "You are Mine"....or is He saying "You should be doing better"? THIS is the difference in RECEIVING grace and AUDITIONING for it!*

Day 2: Earning Grace

Read : Galatians 2:15-3:9; Luke 18:9-14; Romans 4:4-5

In Galatians 3:2, Paul is basically asking the Galatians, "Did you begin with grace, but then decide you needed to finish the job yourself?" This is the performance trap we can easily fall into. We may know salvation is a gift, BUT somewhere along the way, we start living our lives as if everything else has to be earned.

"Did you receive the Spirit by works, or by believing what you heard? "

- GALATIANS 3:2

User Guide:

How to use this study guide:

- **Pray** : Ask God to reveal Himself to you.
- **Read :** Read the daily scripture, take notes, and write down anything the Spirit reveals to you.
- **Study :** Read the daily study section and prayerfully answer the discussion questions.
- **Act** : Take a step, even if it's small, to put what you are learning into action.
- **Gather & Share** : Gather with your GUMC small group and use the discussion section to share what you have learned, ask the hard questions, and receive prayer for anything you are struggling with.

- NOTE: If you need help finding a group - Reach out to our Discipleship Director, Melonie at: meloniep@gumchurch.com

Ask yourself - Are you living by grace, or by performance?

Performance says - *I do, therefore I am*

Grace says - *I am, therefore I do*

Living by our performance can turn grace into a transactional payment system, instead of a free & unearned gift. Performance says:

- *God saved me, so now I need to be a really good Christian*
- *God loves me, so I need to show I'm worthy of that love*
- *God forgave me, so I can't make those mistakes anymore*

Yes, our obedience, behavior and growth matter to God. However, none of those things can purchase grace and acceptance from God. God's acceptance, love, and grace cannot be bought, sold, earned, or made better. The truth is - nothing we could EVER do, or not do, or try to do, could ever come anywhere close to the cost. There is only ONE who was ever good or worthy enough to pay the price, and He already paid it in FULL. Everything we are striving for, is actually already right here in front of us!

Prayerfully ask yourself these questions, and give these areas over to God today:

- Where have I turned my life into a performance review?
- Where have I been saying: "If I could just do ____ , then I would be good (or enough)"?
- Now ask yourself, if you reached that goal, would you have peace? OR would perfectionism and performance continually move the finish line again and again?

Day 3: Saving Grace

Read : Galatians 2:15-3:9; Romans 5:8; Romans 8:31-39; John 10:27-30

What happens when we fail and make a mess of everything? How many times will God save us, forgive us, or keep letting us come back? We have probably all asked these questions at some point in our lives, and the Galatians were no different. Paul reminds us that our relationship with God didn't begin because we were perfect. Instead, it began because we believed, and it is sustained by His grace.

Ask yourself - Are you living by grace, or by attempting perfectionism?

Perfectionism says - *I have to maintain my position at all cost*

Grace says - *Grace sustains my position because the cost is already paid*

This doesn't mean that our sins don't matter, or that they don't have consequences. It simply means that our failures and sins don't disqualify us from returning to God. In our scripture today, the lost son didn't have to fix everything to be accepted by his father. All he had to do was return home. In fact, he didn't even have to return *all* the way home, because the father ran to meet him. He returned broken, but was fully restored as his father's son. This is exactly what God's grace does for us over and over and over again.

- What happens in your own life when you fail? - Do you trust in God's Grace? Or do you: try to hide it, over-apologize, become defensive, try to fix everything on your own, get trapped in shame & guilt, withdraw or shut-down, work harder, or avoid going to God?
- Where are you allowing perfectionism to keep you from accepting God's gift of grace?

Small Group Discussion

AFTER you complete the weekly study, use these questions during your small group study time together.

1. Where have you been "auditioning" for God's grace in your life?

Circle the statement below from Day 1 that you struggled with the most this week (*refer back to Day 1 for more detail on each of these*):

- When I fail, I need to prove I'm still a good person
- I feel like God is pleased when I'm productive
- I need approval, and to be seen as good by others
- I feel like God is secretly keeping score
- Other: _____

_____

_____

_____

2. Finish the statement:

"If I could just do _____

_____

_____

Then I would be good enough for _____

_____"

Share your statement with a partner in your group & assess if each other's statements reflect a life of receiving grace, or trying to earn it by performance. Then commit to praying for each other in this area.

Day 4: Pursuing Grace

Read : Galatians 2:15-3:9; Titus 3:4-7; Philippians 2:12-18

We learned this week that we are saved by grace, and that we could never earn it or lose it. If that's true, then why pursue it? Why should we desire to grow stronger in our faith if we already have all the acceptance, forgiveness and love that we will ever need? While these questions may seem logical to our transactional human "economy", God's kingdom "economy" is not like our transactional earthly economics. In God's kingdom, we aren't pursuing growth because He is standing over us with some type of holy scorecard. Instead, we pursue Him BECAUSE accepting His love and grace transforms us. We are *justified* (or made worthy) by His free gift of grace on the cross. We are *sanctified* (or pursuing spiritual growth & maturity in Christ) by walking in His presence and living in relationship with Him. This is the new life we gain in the Spirit that Paul talks about in Galatians 2:20.

Ask yourself - Are you pursuing growth through grace, or perfectionism?

Perfectionism says - *I pursue growth because I need perfection to be enough*
Grace says - *I pursue growth because grace has already made me enough*

Honestly, as humans we like the idea of "earning" things because it gives us a false sense of control. The flip side is - if we earned it by doing good things, then what happens when we do the wrong things? There is freedom in accepting His free unearned gift of grace. *Which of the areas below do you struggle with the most?*

Perfectionism	Grace
I must prove myself	I can receive
I have to get it right, I can't fail	I can grow and learn from failure
My worth depends on me	My worth comes from Christ
Growth is pressure	Growth is response
I need approval to be ok	I already have God's acceptance

Day 5: Secure in Grace

Read : Galatians 2:15-3:9; Romans 8:12-17; Ephesians 5:1-2; Colossians 3:12

We are called "children of God" throughout scripture. Being a child isn't a temporary or conditional position. God doesn't call us applicants, contestants, or employees that have to earn a position in His kingdom. Our position is secure through His grace. Our inheritance as His children comes from our relationship with Him, not from the condition of our performance. *What would change in your life if you truly believed:*

- *I can be imperfect without being unacceptable, unworthy, or unlovable*
- *I can disappoint someone without being a disappointment*
- *I can say "no" without loosing my value, or being named "selfish"*
- *I can rest without earning the "right" to rest, or being named "lazy"*
- *I can grow into a better me without despising who I am right now*
- *I can receive correction without shame and guilt*
- *I can have weaknesses & limitations and not be disqualified or of lesser value*

3. How has perfectionism shown up in your life when make mistakes or disappoint someone?

How would this look differently if you responded with grace?

4. Questions or thoughts:

Take a moment to write down any additional questions or thoughts you want to share with your group this week: