

All God's Grace -- Not Obligation

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to Matthew's Gospel, Matthew chapter 13. Matthew 13. If you're visiting with us, there's a Bible, black Bible in the chair underneath and there in front of you.

And you can go to that black Bible, turn towards the back and find page 10. Page 10 and you'll find Matthew chapter 13. Page 10 in that black Bible, Matthew chapter 13.

We're going to study verses 10 through 17 this morning. 10 through 17 of Matthew chapter 13.

Matthew 13, 10 through 17. I'll read and then we'll jump in.

And coming to him, the disciples said, Why do you speak to them in parables?

And answering them, he said, To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has to him shall be given, and he shall have an abundance.

[1:26] But whoever does not have, even when he has, shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables, because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says, You will keep on hearing, but will never understand.

You will keep on seeing, but will never see. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they hear with difficulty, and they have closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I should heal them.

Verse 16, But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous ones desired to see what you see, and did not see, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear.

Obligation. Obligation. It means, or has to do, has to do with doing something because the law or the rules say you do.

[2:50] Having to do something because the law or the rules say you do. It's doing something because it is owed to another. To bind or compel someone, especially legally, or morally, to be obligated, or obligations, what it means.

So keep that in mind, as I read the title of this article. Israel blocks Omar Talib from entering country amid pressure from Trump.

Article from Thursday. Israeli officials have decided to block U.S. Representative Rashida Tlaib from Michigan, and Ilhan Omar from Minnesota, hope I'm not saying their names wrong, from entering the country as part of a planned visit, a reversal that comes amid pressure from President Trump, and concerns about their support for boycotts of Israel.

The move prompted a massive outcry from Democratic lawmakers in Washington, with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling it a, quote, sign of weakness, and Omar accusing Israel of implementing, quote, Trump's Muslim ban.

Omar said this, quote, it is an affront that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, under pressure from President Trump, would deny entry to representatives of the U.S. government, end quote. But the Israeli government staunchly defended the decision, suggesting the lawmakers had ulterior motives with the planned trip, and the article continues on.

[4:16] Now whether you agree with this or not, Israel should do this, or Israel should not do this, whatever, we can probably say that the reaction against Israel's decision was because Democratic lawmakers believe Israel was, or is, obligated.

Obligated to have representatives from the U.S. enter their country. They're obligated. They should have to do that. That's the feeling.

We do that with each other. And we think we can do the same thing to God. That He's obligated to us.

We think that, don't we? I was talking to a person in Jerome some weeks back, and I told the person, I said, God's not obligated to us.

And the person said, oh no, He is obligated to us, because He created us. So like I am with my kids, God should be obligated to me. Oh no.

[5:26] That's comparing God, bringing Him down to our level. It doesn't work that way. On the contrary, God is not obligated to us in any way whatsoever.

Anything He does, anything He does do, is purely by His grace.

And even if God would have destroyed the whole world, and saved no one, He would still always be just, righteous, and true.

He will still always be faithful, and He will still always be love. As we come to this part of Matthew's gospel, where the call from Matthew is, bow down and worship Jesus, the Messiah, King of Israel. And last week we saw, only one in four will bow. Today we see the next part of this, of that statement. It's all God's grace, not obligation.

[6:36] It's all God's grace, not obligation. It's all by the grace of God, not because He's obligated to us.

Another way to put it, faith, worship, is all by God's grace, not obligation. To have a faith, worship, response to Jesus, is His grace.

It's not because He's obligated to give that to us. Even though, only one in four will bow down and worship Jesus, the Messiah, King of Israel, that one responds, all by God's grace, not because God is obligated.

The wonderful news, is that, God, graciously grants the ability, for persons to respond, to the gospel message of the kingdom.

It's the best news ever, mercy me song. This is the best news ever. That God, graciously grants, people the ability, to respond to, the gospel message, to bow down and worship Jesus.

[8:06] And there's another part to this statement. And when God, gives that ability, it will, always, produce the effect, of true, genuine, faith, worship in Jesus, the Messiah, King of Israel.

Or put a double negative there. It will never, not produce that effect. When God, gives that ability, that person, responds.

It will never, not do that. That's, that's impossible. It's impossible, that it won't produce an effect.

This is what Jesus, is going to be talking about here.

Interesting, because, remember Jesus spoke in parables, as a way to, describe these different, mixed responses, to him. So last, last week, we looked at the parable, the sower, and we actually, we looked at the parable, verses one through nine, and then we jumped over, into verse 18, to 23, about the explanation.

But in Matthew's, structure of his gospel, he does, the parable, and then he does, this little snippet, of, it's all God's grace.

[9:29] And then he goes into, the interpretation, of the parable. He does that on purpose. Jesus is trying to make, a statement here. God, is not obligated.

He's not obligated to us, in, or in anything, that he's created. All are obligated to him. No one can question him, as to why he does, what he does.

He will always be, just in his ways. God's not obligated to you. He's not obligated, to give you anything. He's not obligated, to give us anything.

He's not obligated, Jesus walks through, explaining why these people, had different responses to him.

And these same responses, would continue to the judgment day. As we, the church, as we're preaching the gospel, to people. People do not understand, the gospel message, not just because, they can't, understand it, but also because, they don't want, to understand it.

[10:41] It's both. But when God, gives that ability, it will always, produce that effect. They will always, run into the arms of Jesus.

Always. So notice how it begins, our first point. God's blessed grace, verses 10 through 12. God's blessed grace. Verse 10, coming to him, the disciples said, why do you speak to them, in parables? They question him. And them, meaning the crowds. Those who had not trusted Jesus. Those who had not bowed down, to Jesus. As the Messiah, King of Israel.

And answering them, he said, verse 11, to you, it has been granted, to know the mysteries, of the kingdom of heaven. But to them, it has not been granted.

Friends, this is a huge statement, that Jesus is making. Now it's true, that it was because, of the rejection, of his message, by the crowds, and the Pharisees. Jesus spoke to them, in parables.

[11 : 50] But ultimately, Jesus is making a statement. Ultimately, it was because, God chose to reveal truth, to them, the disciples.

It was granted to them, it means, God reveals himself, to those, whom he has chosen. John 6, 44. No one can come to me, unless the father, who sent me, draws him, and I will raise him up, on the last day. It will be inevitable. It will always, produce the effect.

But the fact of the matter is, to the disciples, it was granted, to know these mysteries. It was given to them, purely by God's grace.

But to the crowds, it was not granted. The fact of the matter is, to some, God grants them, the ability to understand, the word, which always produces.

[12 : 52] To others, he does not give that ability. So God, justly, withholds. Look at the verbs, that Jesus uses here.

Has been granted. These are what's called, divine passives. Verse 11. Has been granted. Has not been granted. Verse 12. Verse 12. To him, shall be given.

Shall have an abundance. Even what he says, shall be taken away from him. These are passive verbs. It's action that's happening to them.

God is doing the work here. He chose the disciples, and gave them the gift of understanding the truth. It doesn't mean he didn't give that gift to others.

But he specifies with, in reference to, the disciples. To understand, the truth of Jesus, it's not a right. It's a privilege.

[13 : 58] Because God is not obligated to us, in any way. Do not Americanize the Bible.

Remember, Jesus was not an American patriot.

You understand that, right? He was not an American patriot. He was a father patriot. Everything that a father told him, he did. It's no right that we have, to know and love Jesus.

It's a privilege. We are obligated to God. They were Jesus' disciples, because God had chosen them. People are not chosen, because they believe in Christ.

People believe in Christ, because they're chosen. Look at John chapter 10. John 10. In John's gospel, John chapter 10, people came up and said, if you're the Christ, just tell us.

And Jesus is like, oh, I've already told you. But you do not believe. And he says, because you're not my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and come to me, he says.

[15 : 04] The chosen believe in Jesus. And look at what Jesus says, even stronger words, for whoever has, to him shall be given.

In other words, he's saying, to the ones who are given this understanding, of knowing the truth of the gospel, they will be given more understanding. But notice what he says as well, and they shall have an abundance.

An abundance of that understanding. But then notice the negative, he says. But whoever does not have, even what he has, shall be taken away from him. To those who don't have it, they will lose what little they already have.

The fact of the matter is this, people should bow down to Jesus, but they won't. We'll look at that later. Because Jesus brings that up later.

Look, there will never be a time when a person understands the message, understands, it's a key word, understands the message of the kingdom, and does not truly, and genuinely respond to the message.

[16 : 19] Nor will there be someone, nor will someone be given that privilege, but not able to respond, because she or he is not chosen. Like some people say, well, if someone says, I really want to believe in Jesus, but I'm not chosen.

That's ridiculous. That doesn't happen. How do you know if you're chosen? You believe. See? I'm not as dumb as I look.

My mom tells me that all the time. And my kids. It always produces the effect. It always does. God graciously reveals himself to some.

He justly withholds revealing himself to others. It is not our right to know him. It's a privilege. It is grace, because God is never obligated to us.

That's what grace means, right? Grace means unmerited favor, or undeserved favor. Favor that God gives, you don't deserve it.

[17:20] Favor that God gives, you didn't do anything to merit it. Nothing. He's gracious. If it's granted, then she or he will respond.

If she or he truly responds, then it has been granted. And it means she or he has been chosen, because God will only grant it to those whom he has chosen. It's all grace.

It's all grace. Now someone may say, but how can they believe if they're not given the ability? How does God still find fault with them?

Because they're responsible to believe the gospel. They should believe the gospel. God gives the ability? Yes. But people are still culpable.

They're still responsible. And then what's the first reaction? That's not what? Fair. Right?

[18:27] The first reaction we have is, that's not fair. But the reason why we react that way and we respond that way is because we believe God is obligated to us.

Whether in big ways, like salvation, or small ways, like getting a parking place at Walmart. We think we deserve things. I should have a healthy life.

I should have this and this in my life. I shouldn't have problems in my life. And the reason why we think this way, well, there's reasons.

I think it has to do a lot with our American culture that's infiltrated our minds, our mindset within the church. But really, what the Bible tells us is that because we think God is obligated to us.

That's just not so. The triune God doesn't need to give us anything. Just the fact that we are alive is His grace. Remember what we said last week?

[19:38] Just the fact that you're here is the grace of God. we need Him within the next question.

Then why does He make people but keep them from knowing Him? The Bible never says He keeps them from knowing Him. But why does He do this?

I don't know. But if we really believe the Bible and what it says about God, then we will come to grips with this truth.

And we will trust that when the Bible says God is good, kind, righteous, just, and true, then it means God will always be good, kind, righteous, just, and true.

do we really believe that? When life stinks, do you really believe that?

[20:56] When people don't respond to the gospel, do we really believe that? Do we really believe what the Bible says about who God is?

This is what it comes down to. No, it's grace. The grace, His blessing of grace.

Notice the reasons that Jesus is gonna bring up the reason for grace. First, God must move. God must act. God must, or you can put it another way, people can't believe.

Look at verse 13. Therefore, I speak to them in peril because while seeing, they do not see. And while hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them, the prophecy is fulfilled which says, you will keep on hearing but will never understand.

You will keep on seeing but will never see. He quotes, or reiterates, first Isaiah 6, and he quotes Isaiah 6. Though they see, they really don't see. Though they hear, they really don't hear or understand.

[22:10] Why? Because God is the one who gives the eyes to see Jesus, the ears to see Jesus, and the will to understand Jesus, and the legs to run to Jesus.

when the person says, I need Jesus to save me, and they run to his arms.

When he quotes Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 6, you're familiar with that. Isaiah sees the very glory of Jesus, and at that time, Isaiah saw his own sinfulness and the sinfulness of his people, but God cleansed him.

Remember, he took the thong and kind of touched his mouth. He says, your sins are cleansed, and then the Lord says, who's gonna go? And Isaiah says, I'll go. You sure you want to do that?

Call them to go to the people, a people to confront them with their rebellion against God. And they would hear it again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, but they would not act on what they heard, hearing, but they would not really hear, seeing, but they would not really see, because God needs to give them the ability to truly hear, and the ability for them to truly see.

[23:40] That's why Jesus brings this up in John chapter 6. No one is able to come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. How effective will that be?

I'll raise him up on the last day. Because when God gives that ability, that person will respond. Period. But God must move.

God must act. That's the first reason for his grace. Or another way to put it, people can't respond. Oh, but there's another reason, friends. The reason for grace, number two.

Humans are stubborn. Yes. There you go, Bob. Humans are stubborn.

We are stubborn people. Or another way, if you want to put another phrase, people won't believe. It's not just people can't.

[24 : 40] They won't. Look at what Jesus says here in verse 15. For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears, they hear with difficulty, and they've done what?

No, no, no, no. I'm not going to listen to you. No, no, no. You can't make me see Jesus.

Should I say this? I'll say it. Somebody said to me in Jerome yesterday, he said, why do you keep coming up here? I was being sassy.

I said, to see you. He just kept walking. I was laughing. It's kind of funny. Humans are stubborn.

God spoke to them, but they did not respond.

Their hearts were hardened to the truth, so they would not respond with trusting eyes and ears to turn to God so that he would heal them, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I said, heal them.

[25 : 51] Only God gives that ability. Yes, yes, yes, yes. But people are already hard-hearted to truth. I'll put it a different way.

Remember, people do not start off in a neutral position. People begin in the negative. There's a teaching called prevenient grace that God puts everyone in a neutral position.

Unfortunately, prevenient grace is not in the Bible. People do not start off in a neutral position when it comes to God. Paul makes it very clear in Ephesians 2, verse 1, and you were sort of dead, kind of dead.

He's only mostly dead. Oh, you princess bride people. Okay, never mind. He's only mostly dead.

No, and you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

You could not respond and you would not respond. We don't start off in a neutral position with God.

We were enemies of God, antagonistic with God.

[27 : 07] Unless God opens the eyes and ears of a person, they will respond to the gospel message just like the first three seeds. Reject it, the rocky soil, or the thorny soil.

People's hearts are dull. They're hardened to truth. Unless you do what? Well, you green thumbs out there or even some of you who are black thumbs and you try every year and yet it doesn't grow, right?

What do you do to the soil? You gotta firm it up. No, you gotta make it nice and moist. Get ready for the seed, right? People purposefully and willfully reject the truth.

Hearts are hard to the truth unless the soil of their hearts is tilled and God is the one who does the tilling. And even when there is some kind of soil, they still end up in the long run rejecting the truth. Remember the stony pasture with a little bit of soil but the rest of it is like limestone. So it packs down, no root, dies. Goes among the thorns, right?

[28 : 27] The thorns, they're like, yeah, yeah, we want those veneers, we want those veneers, and it chokes the seed, dies. These parables are what Jesus used to conceal the truth and thus they were not able to understand the gospel message of Jesus yet.

They willfully close their eyes to the truth because when push comes to shove, at the end of the day, people want their own way and want to do their own thing.

The fact of the matter is, this is what it comes down to. At the end of the day, you can say all you want, but this is so true.

People want to do things their own way and they don't give a rip about what God says. They don't care. They don't want to care.

It's a good thing that God's grace is powerful, isn't it? Or else, nobody would be here and they'd be preaching to nobody but cockroaches.

[29 : 45] They're not interesting. They're very interesting little creatures. Anyways, so then you see, it talks about the blessing, God's grace, and you see the reason people won't believe, excuse me, people can't believe, people won't believe.

Then you see this, God's blessing because of His grace, verse 16 and 17. He turns to the disciples and says, but blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.

God was gracious and kind to the disciples who were graciously given eyes to see and ears to hear the truth so as to respond and true, genuine submission to the Messiah, King of Israel.

Boom. And notice how strong Jesus says this, verse 17, for truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous ones desire to see what you see and did not see, to hear what you hear and did not hear.

They long to see these things. They long to hear these things, the things that you were seeing, you're hearing. It was God's amazing grace and blessing to them.

[31:03] They were privileged, not because they were smarter, richer, better, wiser, healthier, because any of those things, but because God simply granted it.

Jesus' mission in the world was the culmination of God's purpose to redeem humanity and create a new people.

You have the human race and all their fallenness. Well, God was going to create a new race with all different nations, all different tongues and tribes, all different shades of skin.

They would be the new people, the people of God. And this was all foretold in the Old Testament by the prophets. And Jesus, he's saying, they prophesied of this, and you guys get to see it.

I'm here in the flesh. What a privilege. What a great privilege. privilege. They should take note of this amazingly awesome privilege God had given to them, and not just to them, but to us too.

[32:17] He's been so gracious to open our eyes. Because the fact of the matter is, if it wasn't for his grace, you wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be here. None of us would be here.

They, and even all true Christians, are, one writer puts it like this, quote, privileged to experience the eschatological words and deeds of Jesus that inaugurate the kingdom, end quote.

We get the privilege to read and to understand the word of God. The Father and the Son, remember chapter 11, verse 27, graciously gave us the ability to understand, and that ability is always, always, always effective.

keep in mind that those whom God sovereignly rejects have willfully rejected Him. They're not poor, innocent, helpless victims who don't know.

They're willfully ignorant, wanting to go their own way. When push comes to shove, we want to be autonomous from God. God and yet, in the midst of that, to showcase Himself as a God who's merciful, kind, good, gentle, and loving, God decided to save millions of sinners and showcase, you know, somebody who's got this case and has all these trophies, we are the trophies of His grace.

[33:58] We are the trophies of His mercy where God displays how merciful and kind He is. He displays who He is by saving millions of sinners and He doesn't have to.

He's not obligated to, but He does. And here's the amazing part too. The means by which He does this, to bring people to Himself, is when other sinners speak the gospel message.

The means is when we speak it. You not only get the privilege of hearing the gospel and having responded to the gospel, you also get the privilege, we get the privilege to actually speak this gospel message and God takes our speaking and saves sinners through it.

You get in on that process. Isn't that amazing? Because God still doesn't need you. He doesn't need us to do this. What does Jesus say?

The rocks can cry out. John the Baptist said, God can raise up rocks to be children of Abraham. And yet God decides to use the means of us speaking this gospel and we see people respond.

[35:25] Unbelievable. And by this completely effective means of proclamation of the gospel, God brings His people to Himself who bow down and worship Jesus, the Messiah, King of Israel. And that's for you.

If you're here and you're not a Christian, this is for you. You should respond to Jesus. You should trust Jesus Christ. You should repent and put your hope in Jesus alone because only Jesus can save you.

He died on behalf of sinners. Repent and put your trust in Jesus that He died for your sins and He resurrected from the dead and you say, Lord God, I repent and I put my trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and my Lord and He will save you.

This truth that we've seen here should evoke in us great praise, thanks, and humility. That God Himself would mercifully open our eyes and ears to hear and understand the truth.

To give praise and thanks to God. He didn't have to do this. He should just humble us that God would show us such mercy and kindness and not only have humility before Him, but for each other because guess what?

[36:47] You're no better than me. I'm no better than you. We're all in the same boat. We all deserve judgment and yet He's given us His mercy and grace.

That's why we're able to respond to each other with gracious love and compassion. Why? Because God has shown us His gracious love and compassion, right? Well, that's what it should do.

What else? It should give us a heart for the world. People who are dying in their sins.

People who are deluded into thinking that their own way of life is good, right, and true when it actually flies in the face of God and His Word.

They need us to graciously spread the gospel truth. And God uses you, me, means.

[37:50] We are the means, the vehicles by which He saves people. That's what, that's what this truth should do. That's how we can respond.

It evokes us praise and thanks. Because the wonderful news is that God graciously grants the ability for persons to respond to the gospel message of the kingdom.

And when God gives that ability, it will always produce the effect of true, genuine faith worship in Jesus, the Messiah King. It will never not produce that effect.

That's how sure and certain the work of God is. Faith worship is all by God's grace, not obligation.

It's all grace, no obligation. thank you, Father, for your graciousness to us.

[39:01] Thank you, Father, for your compassion that you've shown to us. And we come to you with humility.

We come to you with brokenness. as we sang, Lord, why was I a guest? Why was I made to hear your voice?

As we just sang. And Father, we long to see your churches full.

we long to see you work by which you will plant more churches in Madagascar, awaken sinners in Sweden.

You would plant a church in Jerome. We long to see your churches full that all the chosen race may with one voice give praise and glory to Jesus.

[40:25] Because you, not out of obligation, you have shown us your grace. You've saved us. I want to encourage you to take these next few moments to allow your mind to ponder, to think, to relish in the truth of God's word.

The truth of the gospel. And how God has opened your eyes to this gospel. Not because He was obligated to you, but because He was gracious to you.

Praise Him. Give Him thanks. And after a few moments, you have the opportunity to respond, giving.

That's the way you respond. because what's told within our wallets, it shows what's in our hearts. We'll sing.

We'll pray. We'll minister in conversations after our service. I want to encourage you just a few moments between you and the Lord to pray, O Christian, to ponder follower of Jesus, to give thanks, member of Cottonwood Bible, for the mercy that God has shown to you, for the grace that He's granted to you.

[42:17] Amen.