

GRACE, SELF-DISCIPLINE AND REPENTANCE



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The topic of our meditation today is composed of three themes, which have already been the subject of many in-depth teachings by Christian and non-Christian researchers and teachers.

For the record, Grace and Repentance have been dealt with extensively in our previous meditations and audio-visual teachings, which can be found on our website: www.mevchristocentrique.org.

Here, we'll take a look at how Grace, self-discipline, and repentance can work together, and

converge harmoniously in the Christian's life, without one annihilating the other.

Grace comes from Faith in Jesus Christ, and it is sufficient to justify man from his sins and bestow salvation. God, knowing that man will not obtain salvation by his own efforts, "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"

Given the above, some might ask, why then demand self-discipline of the Christian? And what's the point of self-discipline when man lives under Grace, which covers and sustains him?

Also, why should the Christian repent every time he falls into sin, when, living under Grace, he is considered justified?

So we might be tempted to ask whether Grace, self-discipline and repentance can go together, or do they run in parallel?

Before addressing these key questions about the Christian faith, as it is lived out in a society of multi-faceted constraints and demands, it is worth recalling that Grace is an undeserved favor from God, in Jesus Christ, which empowers Man to respond to God's call for him to receive SALVATION

Under Grace, self-discipline and repentance converge to accomplish God's plan for man's integral fulfillment and holistic salvation.

1. WHAT IS SELF-DISCIPLINE FOR?

Self-discipline can simply be understood as a self-imposed line of conduct, observing standards for oneself and for others, whether we're talking about family, friends, work, church or any other social context.

It is based on Christian and social ethics, which require "individual or collective commitment" by man, with a view to respecting the values and

ecclesial norms commonly accepted as honorable.

Key elements of personal discipline include study and meditation on the Word of God, discernment, respect for church order, observance of church meetings schedule, a sense of restraint and moderation, self-control, silence, the ability to listen and express oneself in good time, punctuality, a sense of hard work, diligence, a sense of responsibility, rest, keeping your word, respect for others, for private and public property, respect for regulations and public order, dress code, tolerance and patience, respect for family and marital order. It should be noted that the list

of these elements is not exhaustive, and that some of them are related to the fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22.

In addition to the individual ethical balance that personal discipline brings, it enables us to play a positive role in society, by promoting what is good and just (correct, proper), and by encouraging, through our behavior, those who observe us to share our values and adhere to our teachings.

Moreover, discipline preserves us from doing the wrong thing before God and man, so that the accusations levelled against us turn out to be groundless. The biblical account of Daniel 6:1-23 is

more than instructive in this regard.

By exercising discipline, we will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, positively impacting our human environment and our times in every way. We will not allow ourselves to be so caught up in anti-values and compromise to the point of losing our identity in Christ.

Personal discipline is therefore a major pillar in the daily life of a Christian, alongside the other members of his or her community, who may or may not be Christians.

Without self-discipline, it will be difficult even for a

Christian to improve, to become a disciple of Christ and to make disciples himself. By way of example, in addition to the anointing, we can remind the evangelist of his duty to be punctual and appropriate in front of an audience ready to listen.

Ethics are as necessary in the mission of evangelization as they are in any other business or professional activity.

We should also not ignore the fact that the absence of ethics leads to misconduct, which can disorganize and disintegrate the local church even national communities.

In a church mission, or any other endeavour for that matter, self-discipline generally requires self-denial, self-sacrifice and dedication. These qualities even enable us to properly exercise the gifts God has given us, and to achieve personal and collective satisfaction.

Solomon had the necessary assets to govern, and he benefited from the promise that God made to David, his father. However, his lack of self-discipline in his many affairs with women foreign to his faith led him to idolatry, which aroused the wrath of God, who divided the kingdom in two, giving a large part to one of his servants.

To conclude this section, let's remember that Man is created in the image of God, so he is not called to live according to his internal passions and the external solicitations of the world around him: "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men;" (Colossians 3:23).

2. WHY REPENT?

"... God resists the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. Therefore, submit yourselves to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners; and purify your hearts,

double-minded ones. Be afflicted, and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." (Jacques 4:6-10).

This text reveals that repentance is a spiritual attitude of HUMILITY before God, and an act by which Man, as a good disciple of Christ, becomes deeply aware that his actions have offended God, our Father.

Indeed, Man acknowledges, regrets and confesses his sins, and deliberately undertakes to renounce them.

In the same way, the Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:9-10: "Now I rejoice, not that you were grieved, but that you grieved to repentance. For you were grieved according to God, so that you might suffer loss by nothing in us. For the grief according to God works repentance to salvation, not to be regretted, but the grief of the world works out death."

Repentance is therefore a spiritual virtue, which reconciles us with God. It relieves our soul of all remorse (sadness according to the world) and regenerates it, bringing us peace. Through this peace, repentance also reconciles us with ourselves, refreshing not only our inner selves but

our entire BEING.

This spiritual virtue convinces us, in fact, of our dependence on God, and reminds us that our help comes from Him: repentance is a necessary source of encouragement and comfort when faced with our weaknesses and the constraints of this world.

Such comfort enables every Christian to rise from his or her sins, and to arm himself or herself with the strength necessary for resilience in a soul that has been bruised by guilt.

It's worth remembering that, through repentance, David remained in God's presence and favor, but

through guilt, Adam and Eve fell away from God's presence.

To conclude this section, it's worth noting that repentance is first and foremost a personal and intimate undertaking with God. It should be carried out in prayer and fasting, but we can also seek the assistance of a servant of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Self-discipline is an “ethical virtue”, both intrinsic and extrinsic, which balances Man's “social behavior” towards himself and his community.

It enables man to properly administer the work God has given him to do, in any area of social life (professional, ecclesiastical, economic, family...).

A life of personal discipline keeps us from making mistakes, and prevents the collateral damage they

can cause to our neighbors, whether individually or in the community as a whole. Incidentally, we cannot ignore, for example, that when the church leader is undisciplined, both the local church and the faith of its members can become dysfunctional.

As for repentance, it is a “spiritual virtue”, reminding us of man's dependence on God, with whom he is reconciled.

Repentance also sustains the soul and spirit and helps every Christian who sincerely HUMBLER himself before God to remain in the Faith and pursue the path to Salvation.

Moreover, we note that these two virtues require Man to deny himself (ego) and to have a sense of measure, which are essential in the relationship with his Creator, with himself and with his fellow man.

Therefore, in the light of this presentation, can we say that Grace excludes self-discipline, insofar as it requires effort on Man's part, or repentance, because by Grace Man has been justified? Far from it!

In fact, Grace is based on Faith, it is decisive for Salvation (eternal life) and covers everything. Repentance reconciles us with God, regenerates

our soul, and constitutes a spiritual pillar of our Faith.

Self discipline is a matter of Christian and social ethics, necessary for the organization and proper conduct of any work, in the fear of God and respect for standards accepted as honorable for the Christian within the local church and in society.

After all, doesn't the Word commend us to uprightness and humility in our conduct with God and neighbor, and to be found in the day of the Lord without blemish and blameless (godly) in peace? (Micah 6:8; 2 Peter 3: 13-14).

The truth of the matter is that Grace provides THE COVERAGE and THE HELP necessary for self-discipline and true repentance, so that, without this Grace, any commitment to renounce sin and any denial of self, sought through these two virtues, will be nothing but vanity and suffering.

IT'S ALL ABOUT GRACE