

CORNERSTONE

DISCIPLESHIP

GROUPS

ALREADY ACCEPTED | PART 2
PASTOR ANDREW BURNS
SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2026

Main Takeaways

1. Acceptance before God is not based on the size of your sin debt. No one can pay what they owe. The only question is whether you will receive the payment Jesus already made.
2. Grace makes the latecomer equal. The workers in the vineyard who arrived at the last hour received the same wage as those who worked all day. Grace offends our flesh precisely because it does not reward performance.
3. Self-righteousness blinds us to our own need. The Pharisee in Luke 18 prayed about his accomplishments rather than his need. The tax collector could not even lift his eyes to heaven. Only one went home justified.
4. The disposition of God toward sinners is grace and mercy, not condemnation. Jesus was the only one in the crowd with the right to condemn the woman caught in adultery. He chose mercy instead. That is a picture of what God has done for every one of us.
5. The same grace that saved you is available to everyone — including your enemies. Jonah knew the true nature of God and resented it when that grace extended to the people of Nineveh. We must guard against the same posture.

Discussion Questions

Opening — Getting Honest

When you first heard or were reminded that you are already accepted by God, what was your initial emotional reaction? Relief? Skepticism? Something else?

The sermon describes a deep tendency in fallen human nature to want to earn acceptance. Where do you see that tendency most clearly in your own life?

Going Deeper — Into the Text

In the parable of the two debtors in Luke 7, Jesus says the one who is forgiven more will love more. Over time, do you think it becomes easier or harder to stay connected to the reality of how much you have been forgiven? Why?

The sermon describes the Pharisee in Luke 18 as someone who used the word "I" five times in his prayer and was essentially praying to himself. What does a prayer that is genuinely directed toward God look and feel like, compared to one that is really about self-justification?

The tax collector used a word that carries the meaning of an atoning sacrifice — essentially asking God to be merciful through the means of that sacrifice. He went home justified without being given a list of conditions to meet first. What does that tell you about how justification actually works?

In the story of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus did not approve of what she had done, but he also did not condemn her. He simply said to go and sin no more. How do you hold together the truth that God does not condemn you and the call to walk in a new way of living?

The sermon raises the story of Jonah as an example of someone who resented God's grace being extended to his enemies. Is there a category of person — a type of sin, a particular background, a specific kind of wrong — where you find it genuinely difficult to celebrate when someone receives grace? What do you think is underneath that reaction?

Getting Personal — Honest Reflection

The sermon describes the elder brother in the prodigal son story refusing to even call the returning son his brother, saying instead "this son of yours." Have you ever found yourself distancing yourself from someone else's restoration because it felt unfair to you?

The sermon mentions that it is easy, especially for long-time believers, to forget the size of their own forgiven debt. How do you keep that reality alive and present without fixating on past sin?

The man on the cross next to Jesus had no time left to perform any good works. His only act was putting his faith in Jesus. If someone asked you why you are accepted before God, what would your honest, gut-level answer be? Does your actual answer line up with what the Word says?

Practical Application

This week, try one or more of the following:

Examine your prayer life. Read back through a recent prayer, either written or recalled from memory. How much of it was centered on what you have done or not done versus genuine dependence on God's grace and mercy?

Identify the "Nineveh" in your life. Think of someone or a group of people whose receiving of God's grace would be genuinely difficult for you to celebrate. Bring that honestly before God and ask Him to align your heart with His.

Practice drawing near with confidence. Hebrews 4:16 describes approaching the throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy and find grace in time of need. Set aside time this week specifically to do that — not to report your performance, but to receive.

Have a conversation. If you are in a relationship with someone who believes their sin is too large or their life too far gone for grace to reach them, consider sharing what you heard in this message. You do not need to have all the answers. The story of the tax collector alone is worth passing on.

Closing

As you close your group time, pray together with these themes in mind:

- Gratitude for grace that is not proportional to merit
- Honesty about any self-righteousness or resentment of grace extended to others
- Confidence to approach God not on the basis of performance but on the basis of what Jesus accomplished
- Openness to receive mercy and right standing with God as a daily, ongoing reality

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

— Hebrews 4:16

News & Events

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

- August 16 - Communion
- September 13 - Intro to Cornerstone Life

