

## Therefore

Today, I am going to tell you about one word that can change the way you see and study the Bible, one word that can radically change your life. That word is “therefore”, and it often serves as a transition between an “indicative” and an “imperative”.

Technically speaking, the words indicative and imperative describe how verbs are used. A verb is said to be indicative when it asserts a fact or truth. A verb is an imperative when it gives a command or exhortation. Today we are going to broaden the scope of that, and look at the how the word therefore links the indicatives of grace with the imperatives of faith.

When we say “the indicative”, it refers to what God has done for believers in Christ. That’s the grace. When we say “the imperative”, it is the call for believers to live in light of that grace. That’s your faith. The word “therefore” connects them.

Any call to faith must first begin with grace. The imperatives of faith must be grounded in the indicatives of grace. The godly response to grace is faithful obedience. But you must remember that living the Christian life is not simply what you do for God. It is a response to what God has done for you. Yes, you are called to obey, but the spiritual validity of all obedience hangs on whether it is a response to God’s grace in Christ or a bid for God’s grace in Christ.

You don’t earn grace you learn grace. That’s what will empower your faith. As you study Scripture, remember that the imperatives are always rooted in the indicatives. God calls you to believe what Christ has done, is doing, and will do, and to become who you already are in Him. Believers are to believe in grace, live in grace, and grow in grace.

Here are just a few of the many examples of “therefore” that we could examine.

- Romans 11:33-12:2 – based on all Paul has said about God’s plan from chapters 1-11, at the end Paul gives a glorious doxology, and then, he tells you how you should live.
- 1 Corinthians 15:58 – based on the resurrection, Paul tells you to live all out
- Galatians 5:1 – Jesus Christ sets you free to live in liberty (cf. Romans 10:4)
- Ephesians 4:1 – chapters 1-3 give you the indicatives (this is who you are in Christ), and chapters 4-6 give you the imperatives (this is how you live in accordance with that).
- Philippians 4:1 – you live for today by having an eye for tomorrow (Philippians 3:20-21)
- Colossians 2:16 – because Christ has done the work (vs.13-15), these things don’t work – Legalism (vs.16-17) / Mysticism (vs.18-19) / Asceticism (monasticism) (vs.20-23)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 – your reception in glory (vs.13-14), the redemption of your body (vs.15-16), and your reunion with loved ones (vs.17-18), offers you real encouragement

This is something that can impact your entire life. Even if you have known some of these truths for most of your life, you need to understand how grace and faith fit together. Let me explain. Perhaps you are in a situation that has you in tears, or maybe you are beset by certain fears. Yet you don’t understand how you can act like you ought to act in your situation. You might be one of those people who only hear the imperatives, the commands, and you think, “I know I should do that. I’ve prayed about it. I’ve listened to sermons, read books, studied my Bible, had an

accountability partner, but I'm still not doing the right thing, and I don't feel like I really can". Perhaps you self-sabotage because you fear that you can't handle the responsibility. It is as if you subconsciously want to fail because then you won't have to deal with it.

But your issue isn't about having the faith to live up to the standard of God's grace. That isn't what grace is all about. The issue is that you have been doing it in your own strength, because you haven't understood that you can rest in the finished work of Christ. This is what will give you not only hope, and not just motivation, grace is what will give you power. And I want you to understand faith in relation to grace properly. You see, it is not just a matter of, "you have been given grace so now you *should* act in faith", but that "you have been given grace so now you *can* act in faith". But you must first be pointed away from yourself and led to Christ.

I want to give you a mental picture to see the indicatives of God's grace as your Heavenly Father intends them to be for you. Imagine yourself in His lap, and hearing Him say your name, and then "I love you so much". Knowing yourself, and who you are and how you are, your response might be, "Why, Father?" And you hear Him answer, "Just because you are mine". He loves you because you belong to Him. Now imagine yourself coming to Him, time and again, whether you've done good or bad, and hearing Him say, "I love you because you're mine". Those wonderful indicatives of God's grace are what give you true hope, true gratefulness, and a true sense of safety, satisfaction, and significance.

The creator of the universe loves you and wants to tell you He loves you, over and over again. The indicatives of grace aren't a license to live as you want. They are a joy and a freedom to live for the one who loves you most, who loves you perfectly, and who knows everything about you, and what you've done, and what you still might do, and yet, when you come to Him, His response is still, "I love you because you belong to me." That is the understanding that takes the imperatives of faith and grounds them in the indicatives of grace. When you really understand that because of Christ, God loves you just because you are His, this is what builds your faith.

You belong to God's family, and your Heavenly Father is going to make you just like your elder brother, your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. God knows you better than you know yourself, and He says you are changed, you are changing, and you will change, even if it doesn't look that way to you right now. And no matter how bad you've blown it, no matter what else your Father needs to tell you, the first thing He is going to say as you climb into His lap is, "I love you because you're mine". Our world says that performance earns love and acceptance. Jesus says belonging to Him means that you're part of God's family, and that is what ensures love and acceptance.

Tim Keller – "In every other religion the indicative flows from the imperative. Which means, 'because I do, therefore I am...because I do this, therefore I'm a child of God.' But only in Christianity does the imperative flow from the indicative. 'Because I am in Christ all these things, therefore I obey.' Exactly the opposite."

So when guilt, failure, self-condemnation, and feelings of being unchangeable and unlovable creep into your head, rest in the truth that your Heavenly Father is saying to you, "I love you".

Therefore, have faith in God.