

Session 2 The Gospel of Grace: An Overview

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

In this session I want to talk a moment on the gospel of grace. I may be going in a different direction than you might be expecting. The most powerful and significant message ever given to the human race or ever spoken by the human race is called the gospel of grace in Acts 20. Paul said, “I do not count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). He is talking about his lifelong commission. Paul was saying that he was committed to being a faithful witness to the truth of the gospel of grace. That is what I want to highlight and define in this session, and I want to call you to respond to be a faithful witness to the gospel of grace.

Here is the negative takeaway. I believe that most of the preaching on grace in our nation is a distorted grace message, not the true biblical grace message. The Body of Christ is in a crisis right now. It needs to restore and recover the faithful preaching of the New Testament grace message. If you agree with Paul that you will commit to testifying to this most dynamic and glorious message, that will bring much opposition and much criticism, even within the Body of Christ.

WE NEED TO CONTEND FOR THE TRUE GRACE MESSAGE

Paragraph B. I want to define the negative and then define the positive of what this message is. That is the crux of where I want to go. The Scripture calls us to contend for the true grace message. Look at Jude 3. The apostle Jude wrote, “I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” Verse 4, “For certain men have crept into the church unnoticed.” These were actually men who were ungodly in their private lives. Publically they were seen as godly men. Privately they had all kinds of things going on in their lives. Here is what these men did. They turned the grace message into a message that empowered lewdness, or you could call it lustfulness, or you could call it compromise.

Let’s look at this verse again. I believe, this needs to be a very familiar verse to every fiery, zealous believer in the Body of Christ today. I believe the greatest conflict in the Church and the greatest damage in the Church is around this issue. Most believers are not even aware that there is an issue and that there is a great battle going on. Let’s read this verse again. This was within the first generation of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Already the false message had made its way into the early Church, within one generation. The apostle Jude said this, “You need to contend earnestly. You need to stand your ground” (Jude 3, paraphrased). To contend earnestly implies resistance. It implies a struggle. If you have set your heart to be a faithful witness of the New Testament grace message, you will understand that it will require earnest contending. You will have to know your Bible. I don’t mean you have to be a Bible scholar, but you need to know the basics. You will have to be able to bear resistance from other believers if you take this stand. This is what the Lord spoke through Jude. He said in effect, “It is necessary that we contend earnestly for the faith that was originally given to us by the first apostles” (Jude 3, paraphrased). Verse 4, “For certain men have crept into the Church unnoticed.” This had happened already within one generation. When he says men crept in, he is talking about preachers in the Church. They were unnoticed and unrecognized by the majority.

A FALSE GRACE MESSAGE

The same crisis is happening today. I turn on the TV, I watch it on the internet, or I watch conferences, and I hear preaching about grace. There is so much being proclaimed in the name of grace that is actually contrary to the true New Testament grace message. I want to encourage you to be among those who are fighting for the soul of your generation. I assure you the soul of the young people of your generation is in the balance right now in the Church-world in America. Many young people are leaving the faith and many more are adopting a distorted grace message while imagining they are being true to the faith. The number of people who are actually being true to the faith is smaller than we imagine. The Holy Spirit is about to breathe on them and we will have a mighty increase of the spirit of truth even in the midst of the Church.

These men crept in unnoticed. They turned the grace message into lewdness. They made people comfortable in a lifestyle of compromise while claiming they were under the grace of God. How familiar does that sound today? Preachers have turned the message of grace into a message that makes people comfortable while deliberately living in compromise, saying, “The grace of God, means that Jesus did it all for us anyway. Let’s eat, drink, and be merry. It’s not a big deal. That is what grace is all about.” This is a deception and it is increasing on college campuses and in the Body of Christ, particularly among young adults.

THE NUMBER ONE CHALLENGE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Paragraph C. I will say it again. I believe this is one of the greatest challenges. I want to say it more strongly; I believe it is the number one challenge in the Body of Christ. I can think of a number of crisis areas, but if this area goes wrong, the power to live with a vibrant heart is lost. We will be stuck with a defiled spirit, living with a dull spirit, and being spiritually bored if we do not have the true grace message. A spiritually bored believer will not stay in the battle very long. They will find more and more reasons to retreat from taking a stand for truth.

Here is what Paul said. Paul prophesied about the generation of the Lord’s return. He said in 2 Tim. 4:3, “The time will come”—he was talking about the end times—“when they will not endure sound doctrine.” He is talking about people who profess to be loyal to Jesus, people who profess to be Christians. That is who he is talking about. He is not talking about eastern religions. He is talking about people numbered among the Body of Christ. Let’s read it again. “The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3). Sound doctrine has many glorious aspects such as the aspect of self denial, of denial of lustful flesh, and the call to spiritual disciplines. Many will not endure that kind of teaching. They will find a few isolated Bible verses to dismiss this. Paul said that they were going to do this in the end times. He said, “They will find teachers according to their own desires. (2 Tim. 4:3, paraphrased). They want to walk out their lustful desires, so they will find Bible teachers who will empower them and validate that kind of lifestyle.

In verse 4, He is talking about a generation of people in the Church. 2 Tim. 4:4, “They will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables”—or they will buy into lies about the gospel of grace. Beloved, that is happening in a widespread way in the western world at least. It is not just a problem in America. It is all over Europe, Asia, Latin America, and all over the western world. You can see this trend mounting up. I am alerted, but I am not afraid. I am positive that a revival of the gospel of grace in its full splendor, in its full glory is on the Holy Spirit’s agenda.

SOME ARE DISTORTING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Paragraph D. There are quite a few other verses, but I am not taking time to highlight them in this message. Paul warned the believers in his own day just like Jude did. In Galatians 1:6 he says, “I marvel that you are turning...to a different gospel.” He is shocked that they are doing this. “There are some”—and these are Bible teachers he is talking about—“who are troubling you. They are preaching the Bible, but not with a spirit of truth. They are perverting”—or they are distorting—“the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7, paraphrased). I am going to break down really specifically how this happens and what the true message is. It is very straightforward in the Scriptures. It is not a mysterious, complicated subject. It is very straightforward. If you don’t have a heart to go all the way with God, you will ignore these verses. You will only emphasize those other verses and end up with a distorted grace message. If you have a heart to go all the way with God and to love Him with all your strength, you will search out the whole message and not isolate one part of the New Testament against the other part of the New Testament.

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE IS A POWERFUL GOSPEL

Paragraph E. There is a need to clarify what the Scripture says. I have several sessions in the notes which we will not cover in detail in this conference. I have them in the notes and a lot more on the website if this stirs you up. My prayer is this teaching will stir you up and that you will begin to contend for the true message. Maybe you are already doing it, and recommitting yourself to contend for the truth. Again, it will cause conflict. There will be believers who will be very upset at you if you hold to the truth. I urge you to do it with a spirit of tenderness, a spirit of kindness, and a spirit of patience, but do not be intimidated and do not back down from contending for the truth.

Here are my goals, in terms of training the young people at IHOPU. I spend quite a bit of time on this subject at IHOPU. I want to train a generation of twenty-year olds to go back home and not be intimidated but have clarity. I want them to not just have clarity concerning the message, but have the experience of a vibrant heart through encountering the truth of this message. I don’t want to win an argument. I want to see a generation of young people on fire with a vibrant heart—young people who are living testimonies that the gospel of grace is actually a powerful gospel. I want them to experience a gospel that doesn’t empower us to live in compromise, but that gives them freedom to walk above sin and to walk free from the dominion of lust. These are my goals. I am teaching this and saying these things to you so that they will become your goals. My point in saying this to you is so that you would say this to someone else, so that you would take these teachings, teach these topics, take a stand, and enter into the fight for the spirit of truth in this generation. Again, we are fighting for the soul of a generation right now. Many believers don’t even know there is a battle going on. It is a very intense and a very dangerous battle.

WE CAN LIVE IN CONFIDENCE EVEN IN OUR WEAKNESS

Paragraph E. Here are the goals I have and the goals I suggest you have in proclaiming this message. Number one, my goal is that individual believers would live confident in the grace of God; that we would live in confidence, even in our weakness and even in our brokenness. Here is the issue: we can be confident that God enjoys us, even though we are not walking in full victory, because in the sincerity of our heart, we are fighting for a breakthrough in obedience in that area. We may not have the breakthrough, but we are not settling down and just settling into compromise. We are warring against the sin that keeps cropping up in our life. If you are warring against it with sincere obedience, beloved, you have every reason to be confident in the grace of God and to know that He loves you. He even enjoys you while you are growing and while you are warring against the issues that you know are contrary to the gospel. I am not saying that you will be confident once you are

totally free. You will never be confident if you have to wait until you get totally free. The only way we will get free is by being confident in the midst of the struggle. The key issue is that we are warring sincerely against the immorality we are struggling with, or the bitterness, or the covetousness, or the jealousy, or the slander, or the gossip—the sort of things that defile our spirits.

THE GOSPEL OF GRACE CAN EMPOWER US TO WALK IN VICTORY

Secondly, I want to see people more than confident. Confidence is very important, but we want to see people walk in victory. I don't have to give you the stats. You know about the wholesale explosion of sexual immorality that is being vomited out of hell through the Internet and where that is going in the next ten years. What is happening to an entire generation on planet earth is unthinkable. In the midst of it, the gospel can give us a vibrant spirit with victory over these things. This is true. This is within the reach of every single believer. This is not for the super saints. There are no super saints. Everybody is weak and broken. This gospel message can empower us to walk in victory. We are going to talk about a few of those points during the next couple afternoons. We will talk about how to walk in victory in a practical ways.

Number three. One of my goals is for you to be faithful messengers of the truth. You will not back down. You will not be intimidated when you find out about some of the really cool people in the Body of Christ. They have a crowd with them. They will try to humiliate you and prove how legalistic you are if you pursue Jesus hard, because the code word for pursuing Jesus hard is legalism. The minute someone says legalism, most believers will cower and back down. They will say, "Anything but that. OK, OK, I will yield. I will be quiet." Beloved, do not be intimidated by these false arguments. It is not called legalism. It is called loving Jesus with all of your heart. I have heard a lot of foolish talk about legalism and what it is, by young people who do not know the Bible at all. They know eight verses. They have their one sword: legalism. Most of it is foolishness and complete deception in terms of the Biblical testimony of what the gospel of grace really is. Do not yield to intimidation when they boldly take their stand. I promise you, they don't know the Bible. They know a few isolated verses that everybody is using, but they don't know the majority of what the New Testament says. You don't have to back down, rather you have to get equipped and be a tender, loving, but bold messenger of the truth.

OUR LEGAL POSITION AND THE CONDITION OF OUR LIFE

Let's look at paragraph F. This is my goal, at least with the IHOPU students last year. I am continuing with this theme next year at IHOPU. I would like this to be your goal as well, regardless of where you are: to be able to answer these following questions with clarity. The good news is that these questions are not complicated. If you don't have a biblical foundation, a good communicator can twist all these around and spin you in circles. The truth is that the answers are quite straightforward and quite simple. It takes just a little biblical foundation to have confidence in these answers.

Number one: knowing the difference between our legal position before God and our condition in our actual life experience. This is where there is mass confusion. You might not even know what I am talking about when I say this. In the next session or two, you will know what I am talking about. What do I mean by this? Our legal position results from what Jesus did on the cross for us. Our living condition is how He requires us to respond. He will not respond for us. Most of the confusion is when people confuse what Jesus did for our legal position with what He requires from us and what He promises to help us with in response to our living condition. When you talk about seeking God hard, they say, "Jesus did that for you." Beloved, Jesus does not pray, fast, and humble Himself, and obey for you. What Jesus did on the cross established us in our legal position before

God. Therefore we are empowered to walk this out in our living condition and our everyday experiences. We can enjoy the power of God if we respond in a biblical way. Most of the confusion is the confusion of this one point right here.

Number two is to know the difference between resting in the grace of God and striving and how they work together. How they are right and how they are wrong. I am not going to go through all these. I am giving you just a little hint. We will look at that tomorrow. Number three. Jesus called the narrow road the difficult road and He also called it the easy yoke. How can it be the difficult road and the easy yoke at the same time? You will see there is no contradiction between those two statements. Number four. Knowing how we can walk in the joy of the Holy Spirit and at the same time have godly mourning. We will break that down a little bit in the next session. Number five: knowing the difference between shame, guilt, and godly sorrow. They are not the same at all. Number six: knowing the difference between condemnation and conviction. They are not the same at all. Number seven: knowing the difference between having all things in Christ and being poor in Spirit; recognizing your great need. There is no contradiction in those things.

I could go on and on. My point is that these answers are not complicated. If you are new with your Bible in the last year or two, you may say, “I don’t know the answer to these questions.” You need to know the answer to these. I don’t say this to be mean, but if you cannot answer these simple questions, you don’t have a fundamental Bible foundation in your life yet. You are going to need to know how to answer these questions, so that you don’t yield to intimidation by some clever, popular Bible preacher who isolates a few verses from the rest of the Scripture and whom you don’t know how to answer. You need to know how to answer them or you might be seduced by what they are saying.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE GRACE MESSAGE

Roman numeral II. Let’s go back to last night, to the message on the first commandment—the foundational truth. When we want to understand the true grace message, the Biblical grace message, we need to know that the foundation of the grace message is the fact that God loves us with all of His strength and all of His heart, and that He calls us to love Him with all our strength and all of our heart. That is the core reality of the grace message. The grace message is not that God stamps your passport so that you can escape from hell and live in sin. That is not what the grace message is. The grace message is not about escaping hell, although I love that part of the message. That is a secondary part. The grace message is the ability by the free grace of God to enter into that relationship where He loves me with all of His heart, mind, and strength, and He empowers me to love Him with all my mind, heart, and strength. In this mutual wholehearted relationship of love, my spirit can be exhilarated in God and He delights in the friendship and in the relationship. This is what the gospel of grace is to you and to me. That is the core reality of it.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, share perfect delight and joy in love for one another. The Father loves the Son. The Son loves the Father. The Spirit loves the Son and on and on. They are in a perfect union of delightful and supremely satisfying love. Because love multiplies itself, it is as if they said within their own fellowship, “Let’s create a race of beings called humans. We will redeem them and we will bring them into that fellowship with us forever, so that they too will delight in the overflowing love we share with one another.” Beloved, that is what the gospel of grace is. The gospel of grace is not about escaping hell, although that is a phenomenal reality. It is about the power and glory of entering into the first commandment. When somebody talks about grace and there is no reference to the first commandment, they are already off course from where they are aiming and where their target is. The grace of God is to empower us to receive love from God with all

of His heart and strength and then to return it to Him. It empowers us, it forgives us, it instructs us, and it releases joy in us. We are on a journey into this reality that will last for billions and billions of years. That is the gospel of grace.

The folks who are distorting the message—and they are many—don't have the lens of the first commandment. They are thinking about how much sin they can get away with because Jesus died and how much compromise they can boldly live in because Jesus died. They are completely off the mark of what the New Testament message of grace is.

Again, I want to embolden you, I don't want to argue. Don't argue with people, but don't be intimidated to take a bold stand. Get a biblical foundation if you don't have one, so you can answer these fundamental questions I just brought up a few moments ago.

THE GRACE OF GOD TEACHES US TO DENY UNGODLINESS

Paragraph C. The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness. If you are hearing a grace message but it does not teach you to deny ungodliness, it is not a biblical grace message. It is a distorted message. It is a grace message that is turning grace into lewdness or compromise.

Roman numeral III. There are two primary ways the grace message is distorted or perverted. The devil doesn't care which ditch he gets you into. If he cannot push you to the ditch on the right of the road of truth, he will push you to the ditch on the left of the road of truth. He doesn't care which ditch as long as you are in a ditch. The first distortion is the one everyone talks about: seeking to earn the favor of God. That is a distortion of the true grace message. Everybody gets that point. That is not a point of contention. The second distortion is the point of contention. It is refusing to respond in wholeheartedness. If you try to earn your salvation or earn the love of God—that is a distorted message. The devil will push you into the left ditch. If you say, "No, I am not buying it," he will push you hard and get you in the ditch on the other side where the grace message doesn't motivate you to wholeheartedness. Either message is a distortion of the truth. Both were very serious problems in Paul's day.

Paragraph A. In 2 Corinthians 6:1, Paul said, "I plead with you to not receive the grace of God in vain." That is an interesting concept. Did you know that you can receive the grace of God in vain, meaning you say yes to it, even become born again and begin your journey, but not follow through with it? It is as if Paul says, "You have received the grace of God in vain if you do this." It doesn't bear fruit in your life. The fruit that the grace of God is to bear in our life is to have confidence in the love of God even in our weakness.

The second fruit it is supposed to produce is wholeheartedness in our responsiveness. When I see a believer who has confidence that God loves them in their weakness, I rejoice if they have wholeheartedness. I don't mean maturity; I am not talking about having maturity. I am talking about longing to obey long before we ever mature. That is what the Lord is calling us to: to make the commitment to obey. The fruit of the true grace message is that it produces confidence and it produces a desire for wholeheartedness. If either one of those are missing, it is not a true Biblical message.

“STRIVE TO ENTER THE NARROW GATE”

I am going to give you an example of Jesus' grace teaching. In Luke 13, He says, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate" (Lk. 13:24). He is talking about salvation. He says, "Strive." "What? Jesus, don't You know the

New Covenant? We don't strive. Go to Bible class 101, get Your doctrine right and then I will talk to You later." Beloved, Jesus understood the grace of God. He was the best grace Teacher who ever walked on the planet. When He says strive, He is not talking about earning anything. He is talking about putting effort into the relationship because of love. It is as if He says, "I want you to put effort into the relationship." If you are striving to earn love, that is an error. If you are putting effort into the relationship because you receive love, that is the true message of the gospel.

At the end of paragraph C, I give examples in the New Testament where we are called to strive in the biblical sense of putting of effort into the relationship; not earning love, but responding to the free love of God which we received without ever deserving it.

"MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ENTER INTO REST"

Paragraph D. Hebrews 4:11, the writer of the book of Hebrews says, "Make every effort to enter into rest." Wait! If I put effort into it, then it is not rest. Wrong! We put effort into it by renewing our mind. What Jesus did for us in our legal position is that He paid the price fully and made everything freely available. However, we have a problem. Our unrenewed mind and our unrenewed emotions resist the relationship with Jesus. We exert effort to renew our minds so that our emotions and our mind catch up with what Jesus did for us so that we can enjoy it. The Word tells us to put effort into renewing your mind. Take time in the Word and deny your fleshly desires. Put some effort into this and you will enjoy the rest that was freely purchased for you by Jesus.

Roman numeral IV. I am going to give you a two hour message in two minutes. These next two minutes are only a one, two, three, one, two, three, one, two, three. I just want you to see it. We are not covering it in detail. In another session we will take more time on it. I wanted it written in front of you here. This is a biblical overview—a brief one.

WE HAVE BECOME A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST

Paragraph A. Paul made the dramatic declaration that we have become a new creation in Christ. This has vast implications. We have become a new creation in Christ. You can read that on your own and we will look at this more tomorrow. This is massive. 2 Corinthians 5:21(paraphrased), "We have become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus." Beloved, you have become the righteousness of God. What does Paul mean? How could he say such a thing as this? He says it because it is one of the most powerful truths of the gospel of grace.

Our human being is made up of three parts. Most of you know this. We are spirit, soul, and body. In our spirit we commune with God. Our soul is our personality, our mind, our emotions, and our will. Our body is our five senses, etc. The day we were born again, our born-again spirit literally became as righteous as God's. It became righteous through a gift. We received Jesus' righteousness fully, freely, and finally. Our spirit man became righteous in one moment. This describes our legal position before God.

"OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY"

Paragraph B. Paul said, "Old things have passed away" (2 Cor. 5:17). Condemnation has passed away. Powerlessness has passed away. I am going to break that down, because a lot of people say that we are no longer powerless. For years in my early days, I said, "What does that mean? I certainly feel like there is a lot of sinful power in me. What are you talking about? Sin has no power?" I want to break that down in a practical way tomorrow. I am giving a few more things that we will look at later here in paragraph B.

Paragraph C. All things have become new in your legal position. You are fully and freely accepted by God, which means He enjoys you even in your immaturity and even in your weakness. The key is that you are sincerely waging war against disobedience. You may be failing day after day, but you are sincere. The Lord enjoys you even in that state while you are growing. He enjoys the relationship. That is good news. Another thing that became new is that you received the authority to use the name of Jesus. You received the indwelling Spirit. You received a lasting destiny, your life purpose, which begins in this age. It has continuity in the age to come. You may not have any fame, you may not have much money, or much gifting, but your purpose in this age actually moves God's heart. There is a continuity of blessing even in the age to come by you being faithful in small things.

I realize I went over the true message really fast. I plan to develop it tomorrow and the next day with more detail. I wanted to give you the snapshot of one, two, three, one, two, three.

SALVATION: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Paragraph D. This is a very important paragraph. The gospel of grace is the good news of salvation—of receiving God's righteousness—in three tenses. Look at this. You receive the gift of righteousness—past, present and future—for the outworking of that righteousness in your experience. Much of the misunderstanding about grace can be traced back to confusing these three tenses.

Number one, you have been justified by faith. That happened fully, freely, and instantly the day you were born again. Your spirit became the righteousness of God in fullness. Beloved, you received a righteousness that even God cannot improve upon because it is His own righteousness. It is perfect righteousness that can never be improved upon. Though you cannot feel the power of it with your five senses, your spirit man became as righteous as God is, as an absolutely free gift. That is the full salvation of your spirit in the past tense. It is complete. It is called justification.

Number two is your sanctification. This is your living condition. It is how you are actually living today. Sanctification is about the transformation of your soul, of your personality: mind, emotions, and will. Through justification you are made perfect. That is your legal position. In the state of your everyday life, things need to be greatly improved. That is the sanctification process. Someone says, "How are you doing?" I say, "Well, in my legal position I am awesome and in my living condition I am struggling." There is no contradiction in that statement. If you confuse what Jesus did for you concerning your legal position with your necessary response your living condition, you will be hopelessly confused about the Bible verses of the New Testament.

Number three is your glorification. It is the future tense. You will be glorified. Righteousness will be worked into your resurrected body. Every desire of your body will be fully righteous. We can have breakthrough in our living condition now and we can have a breakthrough over lustful desires right now. The day is coming where we will have a complete breakthrough. Our living condition and our eternal glorification will equal our legal position.

I realize some of you thought, "What did he just say?" Look to the guy next to you and say, "I got it, I will explain it to you during the break." It only sounds complicated only if you are brand new to these concepts. These are really basic, simple concepts. If you get a little familiar with them, you can understand them in fifteen or twenty minutes by dialoguing and teasing them out with a friend saying, "OK, let's get this clear again." This

is not some big, heavy, theological presentation. As a matter of fact, it is very necessary that you understand these basic concepts.

THREE RESPONSES TO GOD'S GRACE

Let's look at three responses to the grace of God that must be corrected. Number one, the response of the legalistic believer—the believer who is trying to earn the love of God. That is obviously an error. Nobody argues with that point. Everybody is in agreement. The people who believe the distorted grace message agree that this is an error, and so do the people who believe the biblical grace message.

Paragraph C. The second response that needs correction is the response of lukewarm believer. This is the problem of much of the Body of Christ in the western world, but not all of it. There are millions who are being faithful to the truth across the earth, millions. Don't imagine that you and your little group are the only ones who are faithful. There are millions who are being faithful, millions. However, I believe that there are hundreds of millions of believers who are in the camp of the lukewarm. Their voice is very loud. Their voice is very strong. They are born again believers who have the gift of righteousness in their spirit, meaning their legal position is perfect, but their living condition is a mess. They think they are doing well, but they have confused the way they are living with their legal position. They are mixed up. Jesus appeared to John, the apostle, and said in effect, "Go and correct them. They are really confused and I am troubled by their confusion. Tell them they are lukewarm. Tell them that I will vomit them out of My mouth" (Rev. 3:16, paraphrased). This doesn't mean that they were repulsive to Him. Jesus is not saying, "You are repulsive to Me." It is as if He is saying, "When I look at the way you are living and responding to the love of God, because I love you so much, it hurts My stomach." He tells us in verse 19, that He loves them. They are dear to Him. They are precious to Him. It is as if Jesus is saying, "My stomach hurts when I look at how much I love you and how little you respond and how little you understand the delusion you are in. My stomach is hurting because of the relationship of love. Do you know who I am? Do you know who you are to Me? Do you know the deception you are in? My stomach hurts when I look at you" (Rev. 3:16, paraphrased). These are born again believers. They have the gift of righteousness. Jesus knows He died for them, but He still talked to them in this way in the spirit of truth.

"YOU SAY YOU ARE RICH"

He said in Rev. 3:17 (paraphrased), "Here is your problem. You say you are rich." Well, in their legal position they were rich. They had all riches in Christ Jesus. "You say you are wealthy" (v.17, paraphrased). All the treasures of heaven were theirs. That was their legal position. They said, "I need nothing" (v.17). I have heard that from the mouth of many believers. They say, "I have everything. Jesus did it all for me." It is as if Jesus said, "Yes, I gave you your legal position, but that is not what I am talking about right now. I am talking about the way you are living, not the position I have given you legally before God. O born again believers, whom I love, don't you don't know that you are wretched? Your life is miserable. Your spiritual life is poor and sick. You are naked in the sense that you lack the spiritual garments the Bible describes as the garments of righteousness" (Rev. 3:17, paraphrased).

Verse 19 (paraphrased), "I do love you. This is not about Me not loving you. I am rebuking you because I love you." This is why I want to be faithful to this message. Jesus really loves the people who are in this deception. It is as if He says, "I want you to be zealous. I want you to get on fire. I want you to hunger and thirst. I want you to lay aside your passivity. I want you to come after Me. I want you to strive to enter the door. I want you to pour all your strength into the relationship. Be zealous because I love you."

PETER AND PAUL DESCRIBE THE DISTORTED GRACE MESSAGE

Paragraph D. Look at these two verses. In 1 Peter 2:16, Peter describes this distorted grace message. He describes lukewarm believers who are claiming to have liberty. Peter says that they are using it as a cloak, as a cover up for their sin. They are saying, ‘Liberty in the Spirit,’ but that is not the truth. It is a cover up for their lives, which are filled with lust. Look at this. He says, “You are free, but don’t use your liberty in Christ as a cloak or a cover up, as a blanket to hide your vice”—or your lust; put the word lust there instead of vice. He says in effect, “Use your liberty to become a bondservant of God. Use your liberty in the Spirit to be a slave of righteousness and to throw yourself fully into the relationship. Do not use your liberty as a cloak or a blanket to hide your lustful ways, claiming liberty in the grace of God. I don’t believe it. It is a deception.” (v. 16, paraphrased).

Paul said the same thing in Galatians 5, “You have been called to liberty. Don’t use your position of liberty as an opportunity to walk out your fleshly lust and desires, claiming liberty in Christ Jesus. Don’t do it. Use your liberty and grow in love” (Gal. 5:13, paraphrased). He goes on in the next verse and says, “Use your position in Christ to grow in love and in servanthood. That is what you are called to do” (Gal. 5:14, paraphrased).

We have three types of believers. First, there is the legalistic believer. We understand that they are trying to earn their salvation. That is false. That is deception. Second, there is the Laodicean believer. They are passive in their relationship with Jesus, claiming that everything is great. However, Jesus doesn’t buy it and neither does Paul or Peter.

BEING SWAYED BY EVERY WIND OF DOCTRINE

Paragraph E. Third, there is the confused believer. The confused believer is swayed by the last forceful argument they just heard. They come to a seminar like this or a teaching session.

They walk out and say, “I am on fire. I cannot earn anything, but I am going to receive the grace of God and respond.” They are really excited.

They go home and meet some guy, who says, “Why are you seeking God and praying and fasting and denying your flesh? That is legalism.”

They say, “Oh really? Oh I thought that was right.”

He says no and quotes ten verses, but those ten verses are isolated from the larger testimony of the New Testament message.

That believer will say, “Oh, OK, I am free.” They will go and live in their compromise and passive lifestyle in the “grace of God.”

A month goes by and somebody says, “What are you doing? You know better than that.”

They will say, “Oh, I repent. I better get with it.”

They just go back and forth depending on whoever had the most energetic presentation the last time. In Ephesians 4, Paul calls that tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. He says in effect, “By trickery men can

twist the Scripture, by isolating a real bible verse from other scriptures and they end up in deception instead of in truth” (Eph. 4:14, paraphrased).

Beloved, you can use the Bible to present a case that is not a biblical message if you isolate one passage from another. You don’t want to be children who are confused and tossed by every argument. Your soul is in the balance. The soul of a generation is in the balance. We want to be faithful messengers. We want to live in the confidence of this glorious love. We want to walk in victory with a vibrant spirit and we want to deliver a generation in the Church from deception, while we are trying to impact society and win the lost as well.

Amen.