

Discerning Truth and Error about God's Grace

I. FALSE TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH DISTORT THE GRACE OF GOD

- A. One of the great pressures in the End-Times will come from false teachers within the Church as prophesied by 2 Peter 2 and Jude (parallel passages). These chapters are sober because of their warning of the eternal judgment to come on false teaching ministries that exist in the Church.
- B. The most common area of false teaching is that which perverts biblical understanding of the grace of God. They pervert God's grace by reducing its message to receiving forgiveness without repentance and seeking to make people comfortable with God while continuing in their sin.
⁴ For certain men have crept in unnoticed...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny...our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 4)
- C. The true grace message inspires us to deny lust and gives us power to walk godly.
¹¹ The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared...¹² teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live...godly in the present age... (Titus 2:11-13)
- D. Much of the grace teaching in the body of Christ is not true grace teaching. It is distorted as it empowers compromise and passivity as it gives us confidence that God is smiling at us. This false teaching on grace fills the airwaves and the best selling books and many mega ministries. Many grew up with distorted teaching on grace, thus they naturally resist the truth about grace.
- E. What is a false teacher? Those who do not hold to the main and plain doctrines of Scripture. They deny Jesus by denying the main doctrines of salvation. For example, they deny that Jesus provides the ONLY way of salvation. They deny Him by denying the plain teachings on grace and its relationship to holy living as defined by the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7).
- F. False teachers are not only those involved in false religions but can be teachers who are born again believers yet who do not uphold main and plain teachings of Scripture. Some of these born again false teacher will go so far as to lose their salvation. Others stop short of falling away from the faith but will lose their reward for their life and ministry labors.
¹⁵ If anyone's work (lifestyle and/or ministry) is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:15)
- G. Today, some large and popular ministries have false teachers that use Biblical language.
¹ There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly (subtly) bring in destructive heresies...² Many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed (ridiculed). ³ By covetousness they will exploit you (manipulate) with deceptive words...¹³ They are...carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you...¹⁴ They have a heart trained (experts in greed) in covetous practices... ¹⁸ For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error... (2 Pet. 2:1-3, 13-18)

H. The Scripture prophesies of spiritual compromise in the Church in the End-Times.

³ *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed (Antichrist)... (2 Thes. 2:3-5)*

¹ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy... (1 Tim. 4:1-2)*

³ *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)*

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRACE AND MERCY

A. Mercy extends God's forgiveness and grace imparts God's enabling power (to our inner man to walk in righteousness and to function in ministry).

¹⁶ *Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb. 4:16)*

B. Mercy is NOT receiving what we deserve (removal of something negative: God's wrath).

C. Grace IS receiving what you do not deserve (impartation of something positive: God's power that enables us to obey Him). Grace inspires us to repent or to come into agreement (re-alignment) with God's heart.

⁹ *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore... I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor. 12:9)*

²⁰ *Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, 21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus... (Rom. 5:20-21)*

¹⁴ *For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. 15 What then? Shall we sin because we are...under grace? Certainly not...¹⁹ So now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. (Rom. 6:14-19)*

¹ *Since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any...come short of it. 2 The gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith (disobedience) in those who heard it...¹¹ Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same disobedience... (Heb. 4:1-11)*

D. The grace of God sometimes requires us to tear our heart. The Western Church has little understanding of this. Some are confused when they say that a certain teaching lacks grace because it does not allow them to have confidence of God's pleasure over them until they repent.

¹² *Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." ¹³ So rend (tear) your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God (Joel 2:12-13)*

III. IMPORTANT DISTINCTIONS: UNDERSTANDING HOW GOD FEELS ABOUT US

- A. God so loves the unbelieving world even when the world has no regard for Him (Jn. 3:16).
- B. God has tender patience with those who do not repent. They are not to confuse this with His approval or favor in their life. Jesus even gave Jezebel time to repent (Rev. 2:21).
⁴ *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)*
- C. Jesus refuses to forgive those who ask for it if they refuse to repent (i.e., Esau, Saul, Cain).
²² *Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Mt. 7:22-23)*
- D. We can have the assurance that God enjoys us even in our weakness but only after we sincerely repent. Our repentance, obedience and love for God can be sincere while it is still weak and fragile. Grace gives us confidence that we can have a new beginning with God after we repent. Know that God disciplines His immature children that He enjoys (Heb. 12:5-12).
¹² *Whom the LORD loves He corrects, as a father the son in whom he delights.* (Prov. 3:12)
- E. God entrusts more of His power to those who are mature in obedience. In this we do not earn God's power but are protected while operating in it. Four things increase as we experience more of the Holy Spirit's power (God's zeal, Satan's rage, man's demands, our emotional capacities).

IV. JESUS CALLS US TO STRIVE TO ENTER THE NARROW GATE

- A. We are to strive to enter the narrow gate (live in full obedience and to experience the Spirit's life). Only a few follow through in sustaining this quality of life. We do not strive to earn forgiveness but to live in holiness (breakthrough in the heart so we might enjoy what He enjoys).
¹³ *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life (experiencing God's life in our inner man), and there are few who find it." (Mt. 7:13-14)*
²³ *"Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, ²⁴ Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. (Lk. 13:23-24)*
- B. In what sense must we resist striving and in what sense must we embrace striving? To answer this wrong is to walk in legalism or licentiousness. We must avoid both. We must not strive to seek to earn God's love (acceptance, affection or forgiveness). It has been freely given to us because of Jesus' work on the cross. Nor should we strive to establish God's purposes and promises in our own way and timing by pressuring people to respond to us.
- C. Paul exerted much effort in seeking to live without any compromise before God and people.

¹⁶ ***I always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. (Acts 24:16)***

- D. The Christian life is a cooperation with God's grace. ***God will not do our part*** and ***we cannot do His part***. If we do not do our part, then God withholds some of the blessing He wants to give us. ***Our part*** includes making quality decisions to deny ourselves (say no to sin), to feed our spirit on the Word, to ask for God's help through prayer with fasting, and to embrace godly activities (serving) and relationships (fellowshipping, confessing our sins), etc. ***God's part*** is to release supernatural influences on our heart (power, wisdom, desires), on our body (healing) and on our circumstances (provision, protection, direction) and relationships (favor).
- E. There is much error in the Church today about Jesus' command to strive to enter the narrow door. We strive or exert great effort to bring all of our life energies into conformity with what pleases Jesus and to hold our cold heart before God's bonfire so as to receive freely from His fire at the heart level. This is called "spiritual violence" (Mt. 11:12) or "pressing in for the prize" (Phil. 3:13) or "cutting off our right hand" or "plucking out our eye" (Mt. 5:29-30).
- F. The pursuit of "complete obedience" includes making a ***covenant with our eyes*** (Job 31:1), ***bridling our speech*** (Jas 3:2; Eph. 4:29-5:4), ***managing our time*** (for service and prayer with the Word) ***and money*** to increase the Kingdom beyond our comfort and honor (Mt. 6:19-21) as we engage in ***communing prayer*** with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14). This is not the same as attaining "sinless perfection" in this life. We focus on our responsibility to "contend" for complete obedience and rely on God's grace to empower us to "attain" it.
- G. The power of the Christian life is in consistently pursuing 100-fold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly aim at pursuing 100-fold obedience. This pursuit is different than attainment. The 98% pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing on it. The last 2% is what positions us to walk with a vibrant heart. ***The cost of non-discipleship is very high***. The call to be perfect (Mt. 5:48), is a key to living vibrant. The luster of God's light on the inside will be diminished without this pursuit.
- H. We are to pray for the saints to walk in complete obedience and thus, to be found worthy of ruling in the age-to-come. The Church is to have a vision for full obedience knowing that it has continuity to the age-to-come. This purposeful living challenges aimlessness so common today.
¹⁰ ***When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints...11 Therefore we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling... (2 Thes. 1:10-11)***
- I. Jesus exhorted us to pray that we would walk in a measure of grace that enables us to stand against compromise instead of yielding to it so that we would be worthy of ruling with Him.
³⁴ ***Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day (Second Coming) come on you unexpectedly. 35 For it will come as a snare (trap that cause some to fall away) on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things (snare of compromises) that will come to pass, and to stand (instead of fall in compromise) before the Son of Man. (Lk. 21:34-36)***