

Discerning Truth and Error about God's Grace – Part 2

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 in 2 Peter 2 and Jude. 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. They present grace as an insurance policy while we continue to sin.
⁴ For certain men (false teachers) have crept in unnoticed...ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny...our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 4)
- B. The grace message inspires us to deny lust and gives us power to walk godly. We want the true teaching on grace because that is the only way that we will experience God's power in our spirit.
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)
- C. Much of the "grace teaching" in the body of Christ is not true grace teaching. It is distorted because it empowers compromise and passivity as it gives people false confidence in their relationship with God. This false teaching fills the airwaves and many mega ministries. Since many grew up with a distorted teaching on grace, thus, they quickly resist the truth about grace. I insist on giving you the true teaching on grace as a way of contending for your greatness in God.
- D. A false teacher is one who does not hold to the main doctrines of Scripture. They deny Jesus (Jude 4) by denying the main doctrines of salvation. They deny that grace is given to empower us to live holy as defined by the 8 beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7).

II. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GRACE AND MERCY

- A. Mercy extends God's forgiveness and grace imparts God's enabling power (to our inner man).
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 (escape something negative: God's wrath).
- C. Grace IS receiving what you do not deserve (impart something positive: God's power that enables us to walk in righteousness and to function in ministry).
⁹ My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)
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)

- D. There is a tearing of the heart that occurs with holiness. It is costly. I am not referring to sinless perfection but to quickly and continually warring against the sin that we have recently stumbled in. There is a contingency for the flesh in God's grace for those who continue to war against their lust. Grace gives us confidence that God enjoys us (after we stumble and repent) and empowers us to be wholehearted, rather than making us comfortable in compromise and passivity.
- 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)*
- E. The Western Church has little understanding of repentance that tears the heart. This can be 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. A foundational revelation of the Kingdom is that Jesus is our king and we are His slaves. He literally owns our heart, body, time, money and destiny. Many have never seen this.
- ¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality...¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you...and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Cor. 6:18-20)*
- G. To come to God with the true teaching of grace is essential because the power of grace in the Christian life is only experienced 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.
- H. The cost of non-discipleship is very high. 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).

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

- A. We strive to enter the narrow gate (walk in full obedience and to experience the Spirit's life).
- ¹³ Enter by the narrow gate...¹⁴ Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life (experience God 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. 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)*

- C. 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.
- D. We do not strive to earn God's love (acceptance, affection or forgiveness) but to live in holiness (breakthrough in the heart so we might enjoy what He enjoys). It has been freely given to us because of Jesus' work on the cross. Nor should we strive to establish God's promises for our life in our own way and timing by pressuring people to respond to us.
- 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 can be referred to as spiritual violence or pressing in for the prize, etc.
- F. 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.
1. **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.
 2. **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).
- G. 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)***
- H. 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 (equipped) 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)***

IV. DISTINCTIVES OF SALVATION BY FAITH: REJECTING THE MODERN GOSPEL

- A. Saving faith is always accompanied by genuine repentance (Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 20:21; 2 Pet. 3:9). Repentance means to turn from sin. It is a change of the attitude of the heart that always results in a progressive change in our character (Lk 3:8; Acts 26:18-20). The Modern Gospel omits repentance or the need to forsake our sin.
- B. God's gift of eternal life gives us all that pertains to godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). It is more than just having an insurance policy that keeps us from going to hell. Christ does not impart eternal life to those indifferent to Him. Those with saving faith have life in them that motivates them to seek to love and obey Jesus (1 Pet. 1:8-9; Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 16:22; Jn 14:15, 21-23). Obedience is an essential manifestation and evidence of genuine faith (1 Pet. 1:6-8; 1 John 2:3-4). The Modern Gospel does not see a lifestyle of sin as a reason to doubt the reality of salvation.
- C. Salvation is God's work and thus, His gift to us. Believers are saved apart from earning it in any way (Tit. 3:5). Our active faith is a result of God's work in us. It is His gift to us that can be rejected or received in vain. Saving faith is not produced by a work of the flesh (Eph. 2:1-10).
- D. Repentance is not a form of works-righteousness that earns our salvation. The Spirit of grace helps us by inspiring us to repent (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25). First the Spirit moves on us then we respond to Him in humility in our faith and repentance. Then He responds to us by releasing more abundant grace.

⁴ Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? ⁶ But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." ⁷ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands...and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹ Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. (Jas 4:4-10)

- E. Saving faith reveals Jesus as Lord and thus leads us to receive Him as King of our life. It changes our heart (Rom. 6:2-11, 17-18; 10:9-10). A true believer does not take their sin lightly (1 John 3:9-10) but seeks to obey God (1 John 2:3; John 15:14; Matt. 12:50) and live in God's Word (John 8:31; 17:6). The Modern Gospel calls us only to believe in the historical fact of Jesus' death on the cross. Even the demons believe this and tremble (Jas 2:19).

¹⁹ You believe that there is one God...even the demons believe and tremble! (Jas 2:19)

- F. Christ's work on the cross alone paid the price for our salvation. We are justified by grace through faith in Christ alone. We cannot in any way earn God's favor. We are not capable of any pre-salvation change of character that prepares us to earn salvation. We are saved before our faith produces any change in our character. Christians can sin after being genuinely converted.