

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Extreme Grace??

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Introduction

In this first issue of 2012 I would like to address a subject that I believe is being taught by a perverted understanding of the Scriptures concerning grace. The preacher promoting this subject comes from a large mega-church in Singapore and he refers to the topic as “extreme grace”. He combines elements of truth from the Word with faulty logic to arrive at conclusions that are at best erroneous and at worst deception. He does to grace what the Word-Faith group did to faith. They took the biblical application of faith and carried it to an extreme that resulted in the Gospel of Wealth that is now presented by the tele-evangelists continually on the air-waves. As Watchman Nee said, “Any Truth taken to an extreme becomes a heresy.” This has happened to the twisted understanding of faith and is now happening to a twisted understanding of grace.

Application Error

What is called “extreme grace” is the idea that Jesus bore our sins on the cross, past, present and future. Grace has already covered all sin including the sins that you may be committing now. This “unmerited favor” from God has already forgiven you. Because of this you no longer need to confess your sins, you now confess your righteousness in Jesus.

Now, it is completely true that Jesus bore all of our sins. He even took upon Himself our sin nature too so that we are no longer under the power and control of sin. It is completely true that we are made righteous in Jesus; He has become our righteousness. This is actually the proper *definition of grace—Jesus doing for us what we are unable to do for ourselves*. “For what the Law could not do . . . God did . . .” [*Romans 8:3*] How can grace get more extreme than that?

Everything in the Scriptures is in a dynamic balance. An example is “free will” and “predestination”. Both of these are true as long as they balance each other. Eliminating one causes the other to become unbalanced and leads to error. Another example is “submit to those in authority” and “obey God rather than man”. They must balance each other. Faith is balanced by obedience; that is, walking in the Spirit. Grace is balanced by our responsibility. God did what we were unable to do but that does not eliminate the requirements to live Godly in the Lord.

We cannot use grace as an excuse to sin or to continue in sin. Paul said that he does not nullify or frustrate the grace of God [*Galatians 2:21*].

Application Truth

Now, let's turn to the Scriptures to see the true application of grace.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (*Titus 2:11-14 NASB*)

From what Paul told Titus, there is a clear application of the appearing of the grace of God. It is instructing us:

1. to deny ungodliness;
2. to deny worldly desires;
3. to live sensibly;
4. to live righteously;
5. to live godly in this present age.

Grace *instructs us to live differently* than we did before we received His grace.

Grace does not allow us to continue in lawlessness because, as Paul said in the verses above, Christ Jesus gave Himself to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people.

Paul continued by telling Titus:

These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (*Titus 2:15 NASB*)

Anyone who is using “extreme grace” as an excuse not to change or to live differently than they used to live need to be spoken to, exhorted and reprovved with all of the authority of Jesus Christ. This is not a topic that should be disregarded. Paul continues in the next chapter of Titus to tell us why.

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life. (*Titus 3:3-7 NASB*)

Paul describes the way that we all are without Christ and then says, “He saved us . . . so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs . . . “ He saved us, justified us, in order that we would be heirs, which means that we have an inheritance. However, one can be disqualified

from receiving an inheritance.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21 NASB)

If “extreme grace” requires nothing of us, if we only need to confess our righteousness in Christ, if this all operates automatically, then why does Paul warn the Galatians that if they live their lives in ungodliness they will not inherit? Jesus saved us that we might be heirs, yet Paul tell us that if we practice such things as he listed then we will not inherit. It seems to me that it would be important for us to understand what is involved in inheriting and not inheriting.

Any emphasis on grace that ignores its goal, its instruction, is not a balanced presentation of the grace of God. It is a distortion of true grace and will lead us astray from the requirements of the Lord and our responsibility to walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

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