

THE TRUTH ABOUT GRACE

- A. Introduction: We're discussing the fact that Jesus warned His followers that one of the signs His return is near will be increased religious deception, specifically false Christs and prophets. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 23-24
1. The return of Jesus is drawing closer, and we are witnessing the misrepresentation of Jesus—who He is, why He came, and the message He preached—even among those who profess to be Christians.
 - a. The New Testament is a record of the coming of Jesus—His ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection. It was written (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) by eyewitnesses of Jesus (or close associates of eyewitnesses who got their information from eyewitnesses). Its authors walked and talked with Jesus, and saw Him raised from the dead and restored to life.
 - b. Federal treasury agents study legitimate bills to become familiar with the genuine so that they can immediately recognize counterfeit bills. So we are taking time to study the genuine: Jesus of the Bible—who He is, why He came to earth, and what He accomplished through His death, burial, and resurrection—so that we too can immediately spot the counterfeit.
 2. The New Testament writers have a lot to say about the nature of the challenges to the gospel of Jesus prior to His return. They faced similar challenges on a smaller scale (same devil, same lies).
 - a. The internet has taken the spread of false teachings to a whole new level. Added to this is the fact that before Jesus returns the devil will offer the world his counterfeit of Jesus (the Antichrist) in an attempt to prevent the second coming (lessons for another day). The less people know about the real Jesus (Jesus of the Bible) the more open they will be to another Jesus.
 - b. Among other things, the New Testament writers warned of ungodly men among us who will turn the grace of God into an excuse for sin. Jude 4; II Pet 2:1-2
 1. In recent years there has been a huge explosion in teaching on grace in the Church. While some of it is good, much of it is inaccurate and has led to wrong conclusions being drawn by those unfamiliar with sound Bible teaching. It's become common to hear statements such as:
 - A. We're under grace, not Law. Therefore, if anyone tells you that you must "do something" as a Christian (like live right, read the Bible, pray, etc.), they're putting you under the Law.
 - B. We're under grace now. God loves us and wants us to be happy. He'd never tell us not to do something we want to do, something that makes us happy. That's Law, not grace.
 2. It is true that we are under grace, not Law, and true that God loves us and wants us to be happy. But each of the above statements is contrary to what the Bible says about why Jesus came.
 - c. In this lesson we're going to add grace to our discussion as we continue to look at Jesus as He is revealed in the Bible. John 1:17—Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (ESV).
- B. To get started, we need to restate the big picture. Every topic (including grace) must be consistent with the big picture or the overall plan of God.
1. Eph 1:4-5—God created human beings to become His sons through faith in Christ. Note the kind of sons God planned to have: sons who are holy and without blame.
 - a. Holy means separate from all evil, pure, and "dedicated to and thus partaking of the holiness of God" (*New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon*). Without blame means without spot, unblemished (*Strong's Concordance*).
 - b. Man's sin frustrated the plan of God. As a consequence of sin, men became sinner by nature (Rom 5:19; Eph 2:3). God, who is holy (separate from evil) cannot have sinners as sons and daughters.
 1. Sin is an offense against a holy God who is righteous (right), and just (does right). God can't overlook sin or let us off the hook. The just and righteous punishment for sin is eternal separation from God. However, if God enacts the punishment, He loses His family.
 2. But God devised a way to deal with our sin through Jesus and the Cross, without losing us.

Jesus went to the Cross as our Substitute (for us, as us) and took the punishment that should have gone to us. Isa 53:4-6

3. Through His death, Jesus satisfied Divine Justice on our behalf and opened the way for sinners to become sons of God. John 1:12—But to all those who did receive him, who believed in his name (Savior and Lord), he gave the right to become children (sons) of God. (ESV) 2. How does grace fit into this? The apostle Paul was an eyewitness of the resurrection Lord Jesus (Acts 9:1-6). Jesus Himself personally taught Paul the gospel message that he preached (Gal 1:11-12).
 - a. Paul’s epistle to the Romans is his most systematic presentation of his message. In Romans, Paul detailed the fact that all men are guilty of sin and in need of salvation from God’s wrath against sin.
 - b. Paul explained God’s plan to make men right with Himself—how God has dealt with man’s sin in a way that is just or right so that we can be justified or made right with Him:
 1. Rom 3:23-24—For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (ESV)
 2. We’ve already examined this portion of Paul’s message in some detail in previous lessons, but notice one point we have not yet emphasized. We are justified (declared righteous, acquitted, made just as if we never sinned) by grace, as a gift from God.
 - A. Human beings are guilty of sin before a holy God and there is nothing we can do about it on our own. But God acted in grace toward us. The Greek word translated grace is also is also translated favor. Favor is a friendly regard (consideration) shown toward another especially by a superior (*Webster’s Dictionary*).
 - B. Man’s sin gave an opportunity for God to demonstrate something wonderful and beautiful in His character—namely, grace. Grace is the unearned, undeserved favor that God shows in saving us from sin and its consequences through the Cross of Christ.
 - C. Eph 2:5—[For] it is by grace—by His favor and mercy which you did not deserve—that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ’s salvation). (Amp)
3. God’s grace has been expressed toward us—not as a “get out of jail” free card, not to open the way for us to keep on sinning—to provide what was needed to completely deliver us from sin (its consequences and its power) and then transform us into the kind of sons and daughters God originally planned to have— holy and blameless.
- C. We get insight into why Jesus came, and what the gospel or good news of God’s grace is all about, from some things Paul wrote in an epistle to Titus, his fellow laborer and companion in the gospel of Christ.
1. Paul tasked Titus with setting in order the churches (communities of believers) located on the island of Crete, located in the Mediterranean Sea southeast of Greece.
 - a. Paul wrote the letter to assist Titus in his efforts. As part of his instructions, Paul made it clear what kind of men Titus should appoint to serve as elders, as well as what message these men should teach. From his words we get insight into why Jesus came and what salvation through grace is all about.
 - b. We’re going to examine several key passages in some detail over the next couple of lessons. For now, note these four statements in Titus 2:11-14
 1. Titus 2:11—For the grace of God—His unmerited favor and blessing—has come forward (appeared) for the deliverance from sin and the eternal salvation for all mankind. (Amp)
 2. Titus 2:12—And it teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. (NIV)
 3. Titus 2:13—Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ. (KJV)
 4. Titus 2:14—Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (KJV)

2. For right now, look at v14. It tells us that Jesus came into this world and gave Himself up to a sacrificial, substitutionary death on the Cross to redeem us from all sin and then purify us.
 - a. Redeem is from a Greek word that means to let go free for a ransom. It is used metaphorically of Jesus' purchasing our salvation from sin through shedding His blood (I Pet 1:18-19). Jesus came first and foremost to deal with our sin so that we can be released from its penalty and power.
 1. But Jesus also died to purify those who believe on Him. Purify is from a word that means to cleanse (lit. *cleanse a leper*, Matt 8:2-3). When used figuratively, it means to cleanse in a moral sense from sin or pollution by a blood sacrifice.
 2. Eph 5:25-27—Jesus gave Himself in order to sanctify and cleanse the church. Sanctify means purify and make holy. Cleanse is the same word Paul used in Titus 2:14—purify or cleanse.
 3. Jesus died “in order that He might present you holy and without blemish and unchargeable before His searching and penetrating gaze” (Col 1:22, Wuest).
 - b. Not only are we guilty of sin before a holy God, but through our first birth, we are sinners by nature (by natural production or lineal descent) and children (*teknon*) of wrath—unholy and unrighteous. Rom 5:19; Eph 2:3
 1. Our problem is more than what we do—it's what we are by birth. We do what we do because of what we are. We need to be cleansed from this condition. We need a new heart or nature. Jesus said: Blessed are the pure or clean in heart for they shall see God. Matt 5:7
 - A. Because the price for sin has been paid, when a person acknowledges Jesus as Lord, God can treat that person as though they never sinned and indwell him by His Spirit and life.
 - B. Titus 3:5-6—His indwelling presence produces an inward transformation known as new birth or regeneration (from two Greek words that mean again and generation or rebirth).
 2. John 1:12—All who receive Jesus (believe on His name) become sons of God. There are several words for son in the Greek language. This word (*teknon*) gives prominence to the fact of birth. Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God (I John 5:1).
 - c. The cleansing that God's grace provides for us is more than clearing of the slate by wiping away the record of our sins—or declaring us righteous. His aim is complete transformation in every part of our being—cleansing and purifying every part of our being so as to fully restore us to our created purpose as holy righteous sons and daughters of God.
3. I Cor 6:9-11—Note several things about this passage in connection with the idea of transformation. Paul stated that the unrighteous shall not the kingdom of God.
 - a. Instead of listing acts of sin, he identifies people by the behavior: fornicators, adulterers, drunkards.
 1. Then he states: Such *were* some of you. But you are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus by the Spirit of God. You've been changed—declared righteous and cleansed. You have a different identity—son of God.
 2. The word translated wash literally means to bath. It is used metaphorically to mean cleanse and purify from sin. Sanctified means to purify or cleanse (same word used in Eph 5:26).
 - b. Through the cleansing power of the blood of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit (all made possible by God's grace) those who acknowledge Jesus as Savior and Lord are transformed inwardly from unrighteous sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters of God.
4. Back to Titus 2:14—Jesus gave Himself in order to redeem and purify us and secure for Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
 - a. Peculiar means one's own possession: Peculiarly His own—[people who are] eager and enthusiastic about [living a life that is good, and filled] with beneficial deeds (Amp).
 - b. Jesus didn't die to make it okay for us to live anyway we want to live. There is an end game in sight—to restore us to our created purpose as holy, righteous sons and daughters of God, holy in being and in action, sons like Him, sons and daughters who are fully glorifying to God.

1. I Cor 6:19-20—We have been bought with a price. We no longer belong to ourselves. Therefore, we are supposed to glory God in every part of our being.
 2. II Cor 5:15—Jesus died to change the motivation and direction of our lives. We no longer live for ourselves, but for Him. We live to bring Him honor and glory. We live to know Him more fully and show Him more accurately to the world around us.
 - A. That’s what repentance is all about. That’s why Jesus began His preaching of the gospel with the word repent. Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14-15
 - B. Repent is made up of two Greek words that mean to think differently (reconsider, to change the mind, implying the feeling of regret, sorrow). The word implies turning from sin toward God and living the way He wants us to live.
 3. Rom 8:29-30—Our ultimate destiny is conformity to the image of Christ—to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness] (Amp). You don’t become Jesus, you become like Him in character and power, holiness and love. You are fully pleasing to your heavenly Father in every thought, word, and deed.
5. Here’s the point for now. Purification and sanctification is a process. Our hearts (spirits) are cleansed and transformed through regeneration at the new birth. We become holy, righteous sons and daughters of God by birth.
- a. However, our soul (mind and emotions) and body are not directly affected by this inward cleansing and transformation. We must now bring them under control by the power of the Holy Spirit in us. There is progressive cleansing as the inward change shows up on the outside. (other lessons)
 - b. As the process is underway, you must understand the distinction between position and experience. Position is what you are because you are born of God. Experience is how you live. The two don’t always match yet.
 1. We are finished works in progress—fully God’s holy, righteous sons and daughters, but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ in every part of our being. I John 3:2 (Note that v3 states that those who understand this “big picture”, purify themselves or get rid of the sin in their lives.)
 2. What you do (experience) doesn’t change what you are (position), but what you are will change what you do. He who has begun a good work in you will complete it. Phil 1:6
 - A. While the cleansing and sanctifying process is underway, you stand in God’s grace.
 - B. Because we have been justified by God’s grace received through faith (when we believe on Jesus), we have peace with God, and “Through Him also we have [our] access (entrance, introduction) by faith into this grace—this state of God’s favor—in which we [firmly and safely] stand” (Rom 5:2, Amp).
- D. Conclusion: We have more to say about, but consider these thoughts as we close. We are living in a time when the grace of God is being turned into an excuse for sin in many so called “Christian” circles.
1. But Paul, who was personally taught the message he preached by Jesus Christ Himself declared that the true grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness. In that same passage Paul made it clear that Jesus died to deliver and purify us from sin. Titus 2:11-14
 2. God’s grace has been expressed toward us through the Cross. It’s not as a “get out of jail” free card that opens the way for us to keep on sinning and not end up in hell.
 - a. By His grace, through the sacrifice of Christ, God has provided us with what is needed to completely deliver us from sin and then transform us into the kind of sons and daughters God originally planned to have—sons who are holy, righteous and blameless in His sight.
 - b. God’s grace gives us power to live lives that glorify God. That’s the truth about grace! Lots more next week!!