

Contend For The Faith

March 4, 2020 Lesson #8 Turning God's Grace Into...

Warning: Heresy and error will rise up in the church when Christians stray from the pure teachings found in God's Word.

From the earliest days of the Lord's church, a constant threat had been posed by those who want to change God's grace into something it is not.

❖ The attempted changes always relate to either Licentiousness or Legalism.

Jude called ALL followers of Christ to engage in a zealous battle for the integrity of the Word of God.

❖ Essential because carnal religious people desire to alter grace as they quietly operate within churches.

Illus.: A lady on Christian radio gave an exposition of the story of the woman in Simon's house.

➤ Woman was a notorious character according to the standards of the time.

'But our Lord Jesus had no patience with these pharisaical times. He welcomed everybody and when she came in, a virtual prostitute off the street, he gave a huge grin and indicated that he approved of this. Who would condemn them anyway? This is a part of life and the love and grace of God includes everybody.'

Today: Pastors and churches who will allow people to stay in their sin and not speak truth. They turn the grace of God into something it is not.

Jude: 2 Basic False Teachings For Which We Are To Be Aware Of & To Contend For

➤ Certain men would bring about in the church a departure, an apostasy, in two directions

- Blatant Immorality and a Denial Of Christ.

These false teachers were denying, both by their teaching and lifestyle, the lordship of Jesus Christ as the rightful owner of His people.

Peter makes it clear: These false teachers are not saved; not God's sheep.

➤ He compares them to dogs and pigs, not to sheep. [II Pet. 2:22]

➤ The sow had been clean on the outside and the dog on the inside.

➤ Neither had been given the new nature which is characteristic of God's true children.

II Peter 1:3-4 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

⁴ Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

➤ Jude 1:19: He describes them as "not having the Spirit."

➤ If a person does not have God's Holy Spirit within, he is not a child of God. [Rom. 8:9]

A Warning Against Changing God's Grace To Lasciviousness

Jude 1:3-4 ...it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. ⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, ...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

II Pet. 2:2a many shall follow their pernicious ways [licentious conduct]

Shows up in the lists of the works of the flesh [Mark 7:21-22; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:19-21]

Mark 7:21-22 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

- Lasciviousness = aselgeia = used 10x in NT; latin = lascivia = runaway passion and lust
- Lacking in moral discipline, having no regard to accepted moral standards; casting off all restraints; represents all that is filthy, degrading, lewd and obscene
- Jude says they pervert grace, twisting it so that it becomes a pretext for sin.
- Peter might say that rather than seeing grace as an escape from our former lusts [I Peter 1:14; 2:11; II Peter 1:4], it is an excuse for our former lusts.

Peter takes us to the root of their destructive heresy when he adds (2:1), "even denying the Lord who bought them and the authority of God's Word.

Jude says UNGODLY MEN [asebes = without reverence; wicked] will infiltrate the church.

While they PROFESS to serve God, they live contrary to His purposes.

Jeremiah prophesied of such ungodly men.

Jer. 23:14, 32 I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness; they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

These teachers will bring lightness and levity into God's house.

- They'll attempt to distort and pervert all reverence for the things of the Lord.
- Lightness = froth; frivolity = laugh at things that are to be revered and viewed with awe
They ridicule the soberness that comes with true worship of the Lord."
- The fact that MANY follow their pernicious ways proves people would rather follow the false than the true, the sensual rather than the spiritual.

What is the devil's aim by bringing in a spirit of lightness? Make you believe the Lord isn't serious about sin. Satan wants you to think there is no wrath at all in God, that his grace covers all righteous judgment. You may hear the enemy whisper, "Don't fret about your lust.

There is abundant mercy and forgiveness in the Lord."

Jude speaks of "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." [Jude 1:4]

- TURN = modified, something added. It comes from a root word meaning to prostrate truth = to lay truth on the ground and make it something passive.
- Because they wouldn't forsake their sin, they laid the truth flat and trampled on it, removing all its meaning and power.

As Isaiah cried, "Truth is fallen in the street...Yea, truth faileth" [Isaiah 59:14-15].

Illustration: A seeker-friendly church held a "David Letterman Night." The pastor listed the top ten reasons why kids get bored in church. Some of the things he mentioned were so foolish, so far removed from the true character of Christ. Yet everyone in the congregation was laughing and applauding. That pastor turned the gospel of grace into frivolity.

By subtly twisting its meaning, he was laying it on the ground and removing its power.

Ungodly Men:

1. They profess to believe the truth of Scripture while they deny it by their lives. They read the world's books, watch the world's television, sing the world's songs, pursue mammon [money, greed] as the world does.
 - ❖ A walk in the world which contradicts an outward profession of Christianity
2. They teach the philosophies of the world and men. They may promote homosexuality as a legitimate alternate lifestyle, all the while professing Christianity and even claiming that their defense of homosexuals is true Christianity, for they truly love their brother.
 - ❖ An appeal to Christianity and God's grace as the justification for their walk.
3. They change the grace of God into lasciviousness by walking contrary to the truth of salvation by grace alone; or they use the very doctrine of salvation by grace alone as an excuse for their sin.
4. They satisfy their own lusts under the guise of religion.
 - ❖ They take God's grace and subtly twist it, manipulating it, until finally it produces lasciviousness in God's people.
5. They promised the people freedom, but it was the kind of freedom that led to terrible bondage. [II Pet. 2:13-14, 19]
6. These men profess to preach freedom in Christ but in reality, they remain in bondage to fleshly lusts because they were never set free from sin.

Consider: Taking the grace of God that gives repentant and believing sinners complete pardon, the grace of God that will go out and seek the lost, the grace of God that will send the Savior to eat at the same table with publicans and sinners. The true grace of God will call those sinners to repentance and faith, and only grant them forgiveness when they have believed, That's very different from its perversion, that says, 'It doesn't matter, carry on living in your sinfulness and immorality. God is so loving and kind that he wouldn't judge anybody.'

Paul also addressed the lasciviousness in the church at Corinth in blunt terms.

II Cor. 12:20-21 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would... and that I shall bewail [mourn for] many which have sinned already and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Note: In this same passage, Paul calls the Corinthians his "dearly beloved." They were his "children" in the Lord. They had been mentored by Paul, Timothy, Titus and other godly ministers. Paul reminded them: "We do all things...for your edifying." [II Cor. 12:19]

In Paul's 2 letters to Corinth, we observe his incredible powerful teaching to them.

- He wrote on the resurrection, the coming of the Lord, the judgment seat of Christ, Death to sin, righteousness by faith, heaven, hell.
- He faithfully warned them and pleaded with them. No other body of believers had been so lovingly pastored, presented with convicting truth and edified by the gospel of grace.
- They had experienced powerful movements and workings of the Holy Spirit in their midst.
- Yet, a number of them continued to live in immorality.

Paul accused "many" of them being lascivious. [12:21]

II Cor. 13:1-2, 10 This is the third time I am coming to you...² I told you before,...and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned,...that, if I come again, I will not spare: Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

- Paul had warned them of the sin in the congregation.
- All have sat under godly, convicting preaching. All have partaken of God's gift of grace.
- Yet some had twisted God's grace by deliberately continuing to live in uncleanness.
- Paul was called to build them up in the faith, but when he had to return a 3rd time, he had no choice but to deal harshly. He would not spare anyone who was still indulging in sin.

How could these abundantly blessed people choose to remain in such a sordid condition?

How could any enlightened believer continue in sin that Paul called uncleanness, fornication and lasciviousness? How does Satan vex and deceive God's chosen people?

Satan is probably not bent on hooking you with filth. He may know he can never tempt you with gross sin. BUT he may know "what flavor of sin" to bait you with.

- If he can pervert your concept of grace - if he can get you to see grace as an Excuse For Permissiveness - then he can start you down a path to bondage.
- Soon you'll be doing things you never could have conceived.
- Satan will have sold you the lie that it's okay for you to indulge your lust.

For this reason, Jude doesn't beat around the bush. "There are certain men crept in unawares ...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" [Jude 1:4].

In this verse, Jude lays bare Satan's entire plan to deceive God's elect.

He will subtly bring ministers of all kinds into the church to pervert the gospel of grace.

Paul says all these ungodly ministers "hold the truth in unrighteousness."

Rom. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress [hold] the truth in unrighteousness;

- Suppress = hold down; Truth ... is out in the open, but wicked men, so to speak, put it in a box and sit on the lid and "hold it down in unrighteousness."
- They knew the truth about God, but they did not allow this truth to work in their lives. They suppressed it in order that they might live their own lives and not be convicted by God's truth.

Rom. 1:19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

They refused the truth and then turned the truth into a lie.

They refused to forsake their lascivious ways, and instead gave themselves over to their lusts. In turn, God gave them over fully to the deceit of their sin.

Question: "Is eternal security a 'license' to sin?" Charles Stanley

The most frequent objection to the doctrine of eternal security is that it supposedly allows people to live any way that they want and still be saved. A person who has truly been redeemed by Jesus Christ will not live a life characterized by continuous, willful sin.

We must draw a distinction between how a Christian should live and what a person must do in order to receive salvation.

The Bible is clear that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone [John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6].

1. The moment a person truly believes in Jesus Christ, he or she is saved and secure in that salvation.
2. It is unbiblical to say that salvation is received by faith, but then has to be maintained by works.
3. Paul addresses this issue in Galatians 3:3. Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect [mature, complete] by the flesh? [human effort]
4. If we are saved by faith, our salvation is also maintained and secured by faith. We cannot earn our own salvation. Therefore, neither can we earn the maintenance of our salvation.
5. It is God who maintains our salvation [Jude 1:24].

John 10:28-29 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

- Rom. 8:38-39 NOTHING can separate us from God's love.

6. Any denial of eternal security is, in its essence, a belief that we must maintain our own salvation by our own good works and efforts. This is completely antithetical to salvation by grace. We are saved because of Christ's merits, not our own [Romans 4:3-8].
7. To claim that we must obey God's Word or live a godly life to maintain our salvation is saying that Jesus' death was not sufficient to pay the penalty for our sins.

8. Jesus' death was absolutely sufficient to pay for all of our sins—past, present, and future, pre-salvation and post-salvation [Romans 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:21].

False Teachers Are Enemies of God's Grace

1. Jude opposes the false teachers in their sanctioning of immoral behavior.
2. Pervert the grace of God into a license for immorality.
3. Peter had warned them the apostates would argue: "You have been saved by grace so you are free to live as you please."
4. They said the grace of God is so broad that God will forgive anything you do. Therefore, the more you sin, the more grace. So, go to it.
5. Grace is NOT God's sanction by which we plan and excuse our personal indulgence.

Paul writes to some who took God's grace in the same unwarranted direction.

- ❖ They started with a glorious truth in:
Rom. 5:20 Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.
- ❖ No matter how atrocious the extent of our sins, the grace of God unto forgiveness and transformation is even far greater. WOW!
- ❖ They promote the idea that our continuing in sin would only present further opportunities for more abounding grace.
- ❖ How heinous is the licentious thought that more indulgence in sin would be a good thing.

The distortion of God's truth resulted in a lifestyle of licentiousness [only used in Jude] =

- A self-abandonment into what is socially unacceptable.
- They will espouse and support blatant immorality!
- New morality based on the theme of Christian love. Love justifies and covers all!

"You mean that people who would come into the church would actually espouse immorality? It can't be! The church stands as a bulwark against that sort of thing."

Rom. 6:1-2 "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"

To Paul's question, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" [Rom. 6:1], these men would answer with a resounding, "Yes!" These ungodly people wanted salvation without following the Savior who as Sovereign and Lord demands that we die to sin as we follow Him.

They may have intellectually accepted Christ as Truth but they had never received Him into their heart as their Savior. Impostors. Deceivers. Going from bad to worse. Deceiving and being themselves deceived [II Tim 3:13].

Question: Does this mean that a Christian can live any way he wants to and still be saved?

This is essentially a hypothetical question, because the Bible makes it clear that a true Christian will not live "any way he wants to."

- ❖ II Cor. 5:17 Christians are new creations.
- ❖ Gal. 5:22-23 Christians demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.
- ❖ Gal. 5:19-21 not the acts of the flesh

❖ I John 3:6-9 A true Christian will not live in continual sin.

I John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin [cannot continue], because he is born of God.

Faber: God does not save us by grace so that we may live in disgrace.

Truth: Grace is God's means of forgiving our sins, justification, as well as transforming the sinner into the image of Jesus Christ, sanctification.

TRUTH: Anticipated grace is never an excuse for planning to sin.

Eternal security is not a license to sin. Rather, it is the security of knowing that God's love is guaranteed for those who trust in Christ. Knowing and understanding God's tremendous gift of salvation accomplishes the opposite of giving a license to sin. How could anyone, knowing the price Jesus Christ paid for us, go on to live a life of sin [Rom. 6:15-23]? How could anyone who understands God's unconditional and guaranteed love for those who believe, take that love and throw it back in God's face? Such a person is demonstrating not that eternal security has given him a license to sin, but rather that he or she has not truly experienced salvation through Jesus Christ.

I John 3:6-7 Whosoever abides in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth [keeps on sinning] hath not seen him, neither known him. ⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

1. Anyone living in sin is not abiding in Christ and has not seen or known Him.
 - The false teachers claimed to have special revelation or knowledge of Christ.
 - John says their sinful lives betrayed them.
 - His point: Anyone who knows Jesus Christ as the holy, sinless Savior, who came to offer Himself on the cross to forgive our sins, does not live in sin.
 - If someone lives in sin, it shows that he has not seen Jesus as He revealed Himself and does not know Him as Savior.
 - Then John draws an application for his "little children":
2. Do Not Be Deceived: A True Christian Practices Righteousness, Just As Jesus Is Righteous (3:7).
 - When the Bible warns us not to be deceived, we need to perk up and pay attention. Deception is like a fisherman's bait: we think we're going to get what we want (a juicy meal), but we end up getting hooked and becoming the meal!
 - John Stott observes: "The heretics appear to have indulged in the subtly perverse reasoning that somehow you could 'be' righteous without necessarily bothering to 'practice' righteousness. John soundly denies the possibility."
 - John plainly spells out the truth: "the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous."

It is the grace of God working in the soul that makes the believer delight in holiness, in righteousness, in obedience to the will of God, for real joy is found in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Warning Against Turning God's Grace To Legalism

Gal. 1:6-7 I marvel that ye are so soon removed [turning away] from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

- ❖ *Metastropho* = Transform into something of an opposite character = *Grace to Works*
- ❖ Some were trying to add LAW requirements to the good news of God's grace.
- ❖ This attempt to turn grace into a performance standard is described as a perversion, a grievous twisting, of grace.

Recall: Paul dealt with "false brethren unawares brought in" who promoted a different but equally dangerous error which turned the grace of God into bondage to legalism.

- Their false gospel denied Christ's finished work by requiring that I must also keep the Law in order to be saved. [Acts 15:1, 5; Gal. 2:4]
- Paul argued: The believer had been crucified with Christ and raised to new Life with Him. [Rom. 6:1-10; Gal. 2:20]
- Therefore, believers are free from the Law because Christ has fulfilled it.
- BUT Paul was careful to warn against using this liberty as an excuse to live lawlessly.

Gal. 5:13 For, brethren, you have been called to freedom [liberty]; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

- God's true children ought to live according to the NEW NATURE which He has given each one. [Gal. 6:15; I John 3:7-12]

TRUTH: Whether license or legalism, BOTH change and undermine the grace of God.

What Is True Biblical Grace?

True Biblical Grace Is Holy-Ghost Empowerment To Live a Godly Life and Deny Ungodliness.

Heb. 12:28 The writer of Hebrews urges us, Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, Let Us Have Grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

This verse Ties Grace To Reverence, a concept of God that includes awe, respect and soberness.

I Pet. 1:13 "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

- Peter ties grace to a sober reverence that produces true gladness in the heart.

Two Traits That Biblical Grace Produces In The Life Of A Believer:

1. An anticipation and longing for the coming of the Lord
2. A Godly fear and holy reverence for the Lord. These two fruits of grace's work are inseparable. We simply can't possess one without the other.

Titus 2:11-13 "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."